

G. F. HANDEL

MESSIAH

Presented by
The Cambridge Community Chorus and Orchestra
WILLIAM E. THOMAS
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Sunday, December 10, 2005
Kresge Auditorium, MIT
84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge

The Cambridge Community Chorus and Orchestra
William E. Thomas, Music Director

Messiah

George Frideric Handel's

Barbara Kilduff, soprano
Paula Marzlyk, mezzo-soprano
Austin Ryan, tenor
Charles Blundy, bass
Kyle Ferrell, harp

Sunday, December 16, 2007 3:00 pm
Kresge Auditorium, MIT
84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge

The Cambridge Community Chorus and Orchestra
William E. Thomas, Music Director

Elijah

by Felix Mendelssohn

Barbara Kilduff, soprano
Krista River, alto
Frederick Taylor, tenor
Vincent Dion Stringer, baritone, as Elijah

Free parking in MIT's Visitor Street garage
Information: 617-495-2877 or www.cambridgechorus.org

The Cambridge Community Chorus
Jamie Kirsch, music director

Coronation Anthem: "The King Shall Rejoice"
George Frideric Handel

Our Lord's Nativity
Johann Sebastian Bach

Vesperae Solennes de Dominica, K. 321
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

With orchestra and soloists:
Teresa Wallin, soprano / Katherine Crowston, alto
Gregory Zavracky, tenor / David McFerrin, bass

Sunday, December 18, 2011 3:00 pm
MIT Kresge Auditorium
48 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge
General admission: \$15
Seniors and students: \$10

Kresge Auditorium is wheelchair accessible • Parking available in MIT's Visitor St. Garage
Tickets available at the door or online at www.cambridgechorus.org
For more information, call 617-517-3169 or visit www.cambridgechorus.org

WORLD PREMIERE

CANTOS PARA NUESTROS TIEMPOS
The Cambridge Psalms
by Luis Bacalov

Sunday, May 21, 2006
3:00 pm
Sanders Theatre
Harvard University

Barbara Kilduff, soprano
Krista River, alto
Marcus Debusch, baritone

Mozart's
Missa brevis in B flat

General Admission: \$10
\$5 for students and seniors
Tickets available at the door and at the Harvard Box Office, Harvard Center, Harvard Square
For more information, call 617-495-2877 or visit www.cambridgechorus.org

Wheelchair accessible
Limited free parking at garage on Follen St. between Kirkland and Broadway

The Cambridge Community Chorus
William E. Thomas, Music Director

Misa Tango

by Luis Bacalov

1991 Oscar Best Score for "The Tango"

Gale Fuller, mezzo-soprano
Robert Hosenyuck, baritone
Hector Del Carlo, bandoneon
with the Cambridge String Quartet

MAGNIFICAT in D Major by J.S. Bach
and a dance exhibit co-sponsored by the Tango Society of Boston

Sunday, May 19, 7:30 pm
Sanders Theatre, Harvard University
45 Quincy Street, Cambridge

General admission: \$10
Tickets available at the door and from the Harvard Box Office at the Harvard Center, Harvard Square: 617-495-2222
For more information: 617-476-2877 or www.cambridgechorus.org

Wheelchair accessible
Limited free parking at garage on Follen St. between Kirkland and Broadway

SING ON!

The Cambridge Community Chorus Celebrates 25 Years 1990 – 2015

THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS
William E. Thomas, Music Director

DIDO AND AENEAS

AN OPERA BY HENRY PURCELL
Fully staged and featuring Jean Danton as Didon
also SCHUBERT'S MASS IN G

Sunday, May 25, 2003
4:00 pm
Kresge Auditorium, MIT
84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge

\$5 donation at the door
Wheelchair accessible
Free parking in MIT's Visitor St. garage
For more information: 617-476-2877 or www.cambridgechorus.org

THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA
Jamie Kirsch, Music Director

SCHICKSALSLIED OPUS 54
JOHANNES BRAHMS

REQUIEM IN C MINOR
LUIGI CHERUBINI

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2009 • 3:00 PM

Kresge Auditorium
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
48 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Wheelchair accessible • Free parking in MIT's Visitor Street Garage
Information: 617-517-3169 or www.cambridgechorus.org

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS
Jamie Kirsch, Music Director

CANTATA NO. 61
Johann Sebastian Bach

NAVIDAD NUESTRA
And Ramirez

CORONATION MASS
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Sunday, December 12, 2010, at 3:00 pm
MIT Kresge Auditorium
48 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

with soloists:
ASHLEY LOGAN, Soprano
KATHERINE CROWSTON, Alto
LAWRENCE JONES, Tenor
ANDREW GARLAND, Bass

General admission: \$15
Students and seniors: \$10

Tickets available for purchase at the door and at the Harvard Box Office, Harvard Center, Harvard Square
For more information, call 617-517-3169 or visit www.cambridgechorus.org

THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS and Orchestra
William E. Thomas, Music Director in his farewell appearance

Hiawatha's Wedding Feast

by Samuel Colgate Taylor
from Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

also **Harmony Mass** by Franz Josef Haydn

Barbara Kilduff, soprano
Krista River, mezzo-soprano
Charles Blundy, tenor
Philip Lissa, baritone

Sunday May 25, 2008
3:00 pm
Sanders Theatre
Harvard University

General admission \$10 (\$5 students and seniors). Tickets at the door or at advance at the Harvard Box Office, Harvard Center, Harvard Square (617) 495-2222
Limited free parking in the garage on Follen St. between Kirkland and Broadway
For more information: 617-517-3169 or www.cambridgechorus.org

The Cambridge Community Chorus and Orchestra
Jamie Kirsch, Music Director

Messiah

George Frideric Handel's
and Gwyneth Walker's Rejoice!

Rita Ryan

Saturday, December 13, 2008
3:00 p.m.

Kresge Auditorium
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
84 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

\$10 suggested donation at the door, \$5 students and seniors
Wheelchair accessible • Free parking in MIT's Visitor Street Garage
Information: 617-517-3169 or www.cambridgechorus.org

KARL JENKINS
THE PEACEMAKERS

THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS
PAULA MARZLYK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

WITH ORCHESTRA
The Worcester Children's Chorus

Saturday, May 30, 2013, 8 pm
Kresge Auditorium, MIT
48 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA
Kresge is wheelchair accessible

Tickets online and at the door:
General admission: \$25
Students & Seniors: \$15
Reduced rates prior available

"MAY WE KNOW THE HARMONY OF PEACE." Terry Moore

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS
1100 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139
www.cambridgechorus.org

The Cambridge Community Chorus
Jamie Kirsch, music director

Fern Hill
John Craigiano

Mass in E-Flat
Felix Schuber

with orchestra and soloists:
Deborah Selig, soprano • Katherine Crowston, mezzo-soprano
Matthew Anderson, tenor • Michael Pittzer, tenor
Christian Smith-Kotarsky, bass

Saturday, May 12, 2012, 8:00pm
Harvard University's Sanders Theatre • 45 Quincy St., Cambridge
General admission \$15 • Seniors and students: \$10
Tickets available at the door or through the Harvard Box Office
Theater is wheelchair accessible • Free parking at Broadway Garage
For more information: (617) 517-3169 or www.cambridgechorus.org

FOREWORD

This book is a celebration: a celebration of a community chorus, a celebration of individual voices, a celebration of musical leadership, a celebration of political leadership, and a celebration of the power of music to connect people of diverse backgrounds through a shared passion for singing.

For 25 years, the Cambridge Community Chorus (CCC) has brought that power and passion into the life of our community. Twenty five years is a significant milestone in the life of any organization and the Chorus Board wanted to promote special events to celebrate this achievement. We commissioned a new choral work to be premiered at our 2016 Spring Concert, organized a choral festival which brought together local choruses for a day of singing together, and sponsored vocal master classes for high school singers in Cambridge.

Finally, as a lasting tribute to these efforts, the CCC Board authorized the creation of this book as a celebration of the Chorus' first quarter-century, and a chronicle of its transformation from a group of enthusiastic singers meeting in a church basement into one of the leading community choruses in the greater Boston area.

We wanted to record these words and recollections and images as a gift to ourselves—to the many members past and present who have shared in this journey—and as a guide for the future of our Chorus. The Cambridge Community Chorus began under the inspired leadership of William Thomas in 1990, and as we move forward under the equally inspiring leadership of our Music Director Pam Mindell, we hope that our Chorus will continue to create community through music and build upon the experiences of this wonderful first 25 years.

*John Winslow, President
Cambridge Community Chorus*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet was researched and written by Rena Leib, Penny Peters and Jane Whitehead. Penny Peters did the layout and design. We thank all the singers who agreed to be interviewed for “Voices from the Chorus,” and the interviewers who helped with that project: Barret Brown, Jayne Cantor, Phyllis Ewen, Sabra Lee and Miriam Mandell. Thanks also to everyone who shared their photographs, and especially to photographers Susan Giordano, Lois Josimovich, Lisa McDonnell and Paul Horowitz. We also thank John Winslow for commenting on earlier drafts, and Jayne Cantor for proofreading the whole text. We apologize in advance for any errors that remain; we know you will not be slow to point them out!

Cambridge, Massachusetts ♡ May 2016

FROM THE BEGINNING...AND BEYOND

It all began in 1990 when the Cambridge Arts Council, at the urging of City Councillor Ken Reeves, assembled a group at St. Paul AME Church to rehearse Handel's *Messiah*. Singers came from churches or were lured by flyers and ads placed in the Cambridge Chronicle. There were people of different ages, races, cultures and income levels, many of whom hadn't sung in years. There were no auditions, just an invitation to get together and sing. Ken found William Thomas from the music department at Phillips Andover Academy to conduct and pull together soloists and orchestra. The program opened with Negro spirituals sung by Ruth Hamilton and included Part I of the *Messiah* and the 'Hallelujah Chorus'. The concert was performed on December 16, 1990 at the First Baptist Church in Central Square with a chorus of 87 singers and an enthusiastic audience.

After that first concert, many of those who participated wanted to continue singing together. So a small group started meeting with the Arts Council. Among that small group was Rena Leib who is still with the Chorus today. She and others did the fundraising and organizing that resulted in the establishment of a non-audition chorus with a mission: participation in musical performances for those with a love of music and community. William Thomas was hired as the music director and until the spring of 2008 he led the Chorus with warmth and humor and his uncommon ability to encourage musicianship. In 1993 the Cambridge Community Chorus incorporated as an independent, tax-exempt organization with officers (president, clerk and treasurer) and a 13-person Board of Directors, one of whom was the Music Director. Rena Leib was chosen as the first president. To keep the Chorus and its performances accessible to all, no membership dues were required and only donations were requested at concerts.



William Thomas, Chorus founder Ken Reeves and first Chorus president Rena Leib.

The Cambridge Chronicle celebrated the fledgling Cambridge Community Chorus in 1992. Chorus members (front left to right) Joan Durant, Lillian Hensley, Rena Leib, (back left to right) Eunice Margetson, Christopher Grant, Alexandria Cobb and Audrey B. Ince.

INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

A chorus is only as good as the music director who leads it. CCC has been extraordinarily fortunate in the gifted, passionate and committed musicians who have shaped its growth over a quarter of a century.

William E. Thomas, 1950–2013

Founding Music Director, Cambridge Community Chorus, 1990–2008

For three decades, the late William Ethaniel Thomas was a major figure in the Boston area music scene. Born in Kentucky, he was a notable champion of African and African-American classical music, musicians and performance. As a member of the music faculty at Phillips Academy Andover from 1974 to 2008, artistic director of Project STEP, and the founding music director of the CCC, he inspired generations of musicians of all ages and backgrounds.

When former Cambridge Mayor (then Councillor) Ken Reeves hired Thomas in 1990 to conduct one performance of *Messiah* with a newly-formed city-wide chorus, he knew he had found the right man for the job. “It could never have been without him,” said Reeves. CCC Founding President Rena Leib remembers the first rehearsal. “There were people from every part of the community, friends, colleagues and rivals—and William was magical from the beginning; his sense of humor carried everything,” she said.

Reeves founded the CCC around a nucleus of singers at St. Paul AME Church, where there was a long tradition of performing selections from *Messiah*. Meeting William Thomas for the first time, said Donnell Patterson, Minister of Music at St. Paul AME Church, was “like meeting Santa Claus—the African American version.” With his uncompromising musicianship and gift for what Patterson describes as “bringing multi-ethnic, multi-generational people together,” Thomas made Handel’s music accessible to singers with a wide range of musical backgrounds, from fluent sight-readers to people who could not read a note. “He just had a knack for getting people to believe they could do this. He made you feel that this is accessible, and he also had the skills and the vocal technique,” said Patterson, who served as the CCC rehearsal accompanist for around ten years and is now Director of Music at Belmont Hill School.



Well-known for his colorful language in rehearsal, Thomas would rap his music stand and warn: “We have to be careful that we don’t sound like little barking Chihuahuas.” His worst threat—“I’ll sit on you!”—and his highest praise—“Delicious!”—were delivered with equal warmth, and his gift for tempering criticism with laughter kept the Chorus lighthearted through the most challenging musical passages.

“He helped you reach your potential,” said Florence Grant, a member of St. Paul AME and founding member of

the Chorus. “He always wanted the best—that’s why we wanted to do our best,” said Grant. Thomas could demand the best, said former Chorus President Paul Raila, because he always gave the best, unstintingly. “He was incredibly hard-working,” said Raila. “He always burned the candle at both ends, and then he lit it in the middle.” “He used all his brain,” said Raila, referring to what he calls Thomas’s “multiple intelligences.”

To convey the Renaissance dance-like articulation he wanted in the opening chorus of *Messiah*, Thomas would break into courtly dancing gestures. Or—a cellist by training—he would mime drawing a bow slowly over the strings of an imaginary instrument to show what he meant by singing with “slow air.” By such devices, he led the Chorus to a point at which rehearsals became increasingly about shaping the music, rather than just learning the notes.

Although *Messiah* remained the CCC winter concert staple throughout Thomas’s long tenure, in the spring concerts he introduced the group to a widely-varied repertoire. Always



Soprano soloist Louise Toppin and alto Pamela Dillard with William at the 1992 *Messiah* concert.

keen to highlight music with African roots, in May 1996 he programmed Vivaldi’s *Gloria in D Major* with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast*, and devoted an entire concert to Coleridge-Taylor’s work to mark the composer’s Centennial in October 1998. Looking beyond standard choral fare, he unearthed gems by the classical Afro-Brazilian composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia, and the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, known in his time as “the black Mozart.” Thomas led the CCC in the North American premiere of Luis Bacalov’s *Misa Tango* in May 2002. The Oscar-winning Argentine composer attended the performance in Cambridge, a visit that laid the groundwork for the commission of *The Cambridge Psalms*, premiered by the CCC in 2006. (See article on pages 10-11.)

Thomas’s artistic ambition was not limited to conventional choral concerts. In May 2003 he masterminded a fully staged production of Henry Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas*, with a mixture of professional and Chorus soloists and dance interludes. The Exodus project in May 2005 was a fully staged interpretation of the Exodus story through dance, words, and music, with selections from Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* and works from the African-American and Jewish traditions.

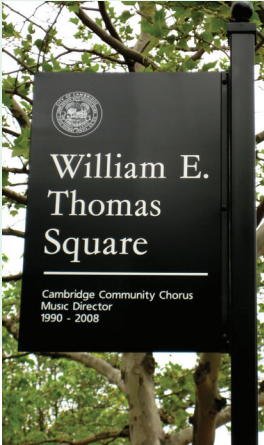
When Thomas retired to Kentucky in 2008, failing health did not stop him from taking on a new challenge: saving the historic First African Baptist Church, built in 1856 in Lexington by enslaved and freed African Americans. He formed the First African Foundation (FAF) to buy and renovate the building and transform it into a cultural center celebrating the lives of African Americans in the Bluegrass.

On Sunday, April 7, 2013, Thomas made his last trip to Boston for an afternoon of music at the African Meeting House on Beacon Hill, organized by former and current CCC members to raise funds for FAF. Tired as he was by



the journey from Kentucky, his unfailing love of food and good fellowship lent him the energy to drive with a group of old friends to his favorite restaurant in Gloucester.

William Thomas’s untimely death on April 28, 2013, at age 62, sent a shock wave of grief through the Chorus. He died as he had lived, surrounded by music, as his niece, singer Rebecca Covington, and his nephew, violinist Virgil Covington III, made music at his bedside. The Winter Concert in 2013, directed by Michael Pfitzer, was a musical tribute to his inspiration and influence, mingling Mozart, Mendelssohn and Handel with Gospel. “William was our founder and inspirational leader and we will always hold him in our hearts,” said CCC President John Winslow.



HANDEL’S MESSIAH

Handel’s *Messiah* became the backbone of the winter choral season for many years. Sometimes a special surprise was added, such as a gospel-infused version of the ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ backed by a jazz group. *Messiah* rehearsals were held at St. Paul AME Church in the fall with many church members from St. Paul and St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church participating. Donnell Patterson was our accompanist for rehearsals and played the harpsichord in the concerts. Every year William added a new chorus or two until we were able to perform the whole oratorio.

William recruited an orchestra as eclectic as the chorus: semi-professional musicians, students from Phillips Andover and other high schools and amateur instrumentalists. A devoted amateur bassoonist would sometimes arrive at dress rehearsals



(left) A Saturday retreat at Phillips Academy in Andover. Small groups were called up to work on difficult passages together. (right) The traditional warm-up backrub.

still in his scrubs, having come directly from the hospital where he'd just delivered a baby.

In addition to the music director, the expenses for the accompanist, orchestra and soloists have been the biggest items in the annual budget. As we have raised more funds over the last 25 years, the professionalism of the orchestra has grown steadily.

Today our concerts can boast exceptional musicians including members of the self-conducted orchestra A Far Cry.

William always hired excellent soloists, and all subsequent music directors have continued that practice. In the early years, William auditioned students from the local conservatories, giving young singers opportunities to perform. This became time-consuming, and the practice was abandoned as the CCC became more widely known and soloists sent unsolicited tapes for his consideration. Many of those young early singers have gone on to important solo careers.

EXPANDING THE SEASON: WORKS-IN-PROGRESS AND SPRING CONCERTS

William and many singers were enthusiastic about expanding the choral season beyond one concert. Open Sings were one way to do this—and bring in new singers. They were also a great way to sing together without spending much money, as only an accompanist was needed. On May 1, 1992 at the University Lutheran Church, people gathered to sing Vivaldi's *Gloria* and also a Dawson arrangement of the spiritual *Soon Ah Will Be Done*. Two more Open Sings followed. In October 1992 William led singers in Schubert's

Mass in G, and Donnell Patterson raised our voices in gospel songs. Then in July 1993 more spirituals and Haydn's *The Creation* whetted the singers' appetites for more. Once an annual spring concert was added to the December *Messiah* concerts, there were no more Open Sings until the tradition of *Messiah* Sings began in 2010.

To better prepare the group for each spring concert, William inaugurated a works-in-progress concert. In September, we would start rehearsing music for the spring concert and present a 'mini concert' in October, which gave us a chance to sing what we had learned so far, with maybe a few additional pieces. Often the Cambridge Rindge and Latin Vocal Ensemble joined us, adding variety and youthful energy to the programs. The proceeds from a few of these fall concerts were donated to a specific group such as the relief fund for restaurant workers at the World Trade Center in 2001 and the victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The fall concerts were discontinued when William retired.

Spring concerts became exciting opportunities to expand our repertoire and stretch our abilities. In addition to the classic choral canon—*Elijah*, *St. John Passion*, *Lord Nelson Mass*, Faure's *Requiem*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Haydn's *Harmony Mass*, Mozart's *Requiem*, *Coronation Mass* and *Missa brevis in B flat* among them—William was very interested in presenting the works of little-known composers of color. The CCC performed *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* by African-English composer Samuel Coleridge Taylor in 1996 and again in 2008 at William's last concert as music director. Coleridge Taylor's music was wildly popular at the turn of the 20th century but had fallen into obscurity. William and the Chorus not only performed the colorful *Hiawatha*, but also *Songs of Slavery* (based on poems by Longfellow). We educated the public about the composer and the piece by means of a large display that was shown around Cambridge at City Hall, the Senior Center, in the CRLS Music Department and the Main Library. Another spring concert featured *Requiem* by José Mauricio Nunes Garcia, an African-Brazilian composer. We have often sung Negro spirituals in our concerts throughout the years, a tradition carried on to this day in the all-American program chosen by Music Director Pamela Mindell for the Chorus' 25th Anniversary Concert in May 2016.

William's ambition did not stop at formal concerts: both Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* and 'Exodus, A Journey to Freedom Through Music and Dance' featured dancing and colorful sets.



(above) Karen Greenwood, one of the witches in *Dido and Aeneas*. (left) Donna Killoran, Jim Peters and Grace Peters preparing to raise the 'bird' for *Exodus*.

Voices from the Chorus

Florence Grant, alto

The Chorus started at St Paul (AME) with a very small group, and we grew as the time went on—inviting people from different churches, and from the community.

William (Thomas) was such an excellent teacher and an excellent person, teaching you how to be a better singer in terms of learning your parts, and at the end, we were like family. He brought such richness to your life. He made you feel so good about yourself.

I started as soprano and ended up as alto. I had my son Christopher there with me for about three years from when he was about eight years old—I didn't have anyone to babysit. He would come with me and sit with me. Then one day he said, "I'd like to sing." So I said, "Ask Mr. William if you can sing," and of course he said yes. He was the youngest singer.

William met us where we were—because he knew a lot of us didn't know what we were doing! But he pounded you until you got it! He would go over the parts, over and over. He knew it wasn't going to be perfect, but he wanted it as close to perfect as it could be.

When we sang *Messiah*, we worked so hard, rehearsing and all of that, that when it was over, you wanted it to continue. You didn't want it to ever end. Because even when it was over, you were still singing it. It was just embedded into you!

I remember going to Youville and Sancta Maria. The people were so appreciative and so excited to have us. And to bring the concert to those people who were not able to go out, that was so wonderful for me, so satisfying.





The North American premiere of *Misa Tango* by Luis Bacalov, on May 19, 2002 in Sanders Theatre, Harvard University. (From left) William Thomas, Luis Bacalov, Hector del Curto, Baritone Robert Honeysucker and contralto Gale Fuller.



A musical and social highlight of our twelfth year was the sold-out North American premiere of *Misa Tango* by Luis Bacalov in May 2002 at Harvard's Sanders Theatre. Mr. Bacalov came from Rome for a week, Hector Del Curto, a world-renowned bandoneón player, came from New York, and Gale Fuller and Robert Honeysucker were the brilliant soloists. The music, with its ever-changing Argentine rhythms, was initially a challenge for the Chorus, but we mastered it and the performance brought down the house. A tango party to raise money for the concert, featuring tango lessons taught by dancers from the Boston Tango Society, was a blast.

William and the Chorus continued the relationship with Mr. Bacalov when we commissioned an exciting work from him in 2004. *Cantos para Nuestros Tiempos* (*Songs for Our Times*): *The Cambridge Psalms*, was performed at Sanders Theatre on Sunday, May 21, 2006, in the presence of the composer.

THE CHORUS EVOLVES

Each music director has brought something new and distinctive to the Cambridge Community Chorus. When William retired in May 2008 after 18 years, Jamie Kirsch was chosen as the CCC music director, after a national search. Our last full *Messiah* performance took place in December 2009, under Jamie's direction.

During his five-year tenure, from Fall 2008 to Spring 2013, Jamie challenged the Chorus with more twentieth-century and contemporary music. He brought a strong focus on vocal technique, improved ensemble singing, and stretched our linguistic capacities with pieces in German, French and Spanish. Jamie's Assistant Conductor, Mike Pfitzer, said that one of the things he most admired about Jamie's work with the Chorus was that he chose repertoire to "challenge the Chorus at the appropriate level, in different styles." One example was Jonathan Dove's piece, *Ring Out, Wild Bells!*



Sopranos Joan Leib with baby Isaac and Eune Lashley at the dress rehearsal for *Messiah* in 2003.

A lot of conductors, said Mike, would have thought, "That's hard, I'm not going to touch that!" but Jamie's approach was: "We're going to learn something here." "I think that's really remarkable and important for a group like CCC, that doesn't have auditions, and that has such a wonderful spirit about being willing to try things," said Mike.

After Jamie's departure in May 2013 to become Music Director of Boston-based Chorus pro Musica, as Interim Music Director for 2013-2014, Mike tested that spirit to the fullest. He led the Chorus through one of its busiest-ever seasons, featuring collaborations with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra in *Tosca*, and with the Boston Civic Symphony in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, in addition to the two annual concerts. And he taught us some Russian, for Pavel Chesnikov's haunting *Spaseniye Sodelal* (*Salvation is Created*.)

Since Pamela Mindell took over as our Music Director in July 2014, she has brought an inspiring fusion of commitment to community and dedication to improving our vocal technique, building on the deep foundations laid by William and Jamie. On her appointment, Pam said that her goals were "to give people a rich and varied choral experience," and to immerse herself in the musical life of Cambridge. She has pursued those goals in her wide-ranging choice of repertoire and in the countless extra hours she has put in to rehearse and accompany community activities like carol singing and participation in the Holocaust Memorial. Most recently, she envisioned and organized our first ever Choral Festival, a gathering of four Cambridge choruses that took place on Sunday April 10, 2016, at Harvard University's Memorial Church.

From the beginning of the Chorus, William and the Board were committed to having the singers, orchestra musicians, soloists and audience reflect the diversity of the city. William's choice of soloists and instrumentalists consistently honored that mission. For the years we performed the *Messiah* annually, there was always a sizeable contingent of African-American singers from St. Paul AME Church and St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church. However, many of those singers never took part in the spring concerts, and we have struggled to maintain a diverse chorus—not for lack of trying. At one time the chorus leadership did considerable outreach to black churches and other organizations to recruit singers, although those efforts weren't very successful.

Voices from the Chorus

Rena Leib, alto
Founding President 1991–1996



From the start, the Chorus has been a source of happiness and community for me. I remember that first rehearsal so well. I was tired after working all day, thinking, why did I agree to this? My daughter, I6, had fallen in love with *Messiah* and read in the paper that a group was forming to sing it, and it seemed like a great thing to do together.

There were many people there I recognized from my activities in the city (schools, override elections, etc.) Some I'd worked with on various issues, and some I'd disagreed with. Hmm, I thought, interesting!

Then William (Thomas) began talking about *Messiah*. He was warm, friendly, funny, and passionate about the music. I found myself sitting up straighter and trying to remember how to sing well. (I hadn't sung in a group since college.) I wanted to do justice to this piece that William loved so well. It was magic. I was hooked.

The rehearsals were great fun, and then came the concert! There we were, on stage at the First Baptist Church, with an orchestra, singing *Messiah*! I was in the middle of it all, thinking how fabulous this is. There were eight wonderful soloists, two for each voice, a group as diverse as the Chorus. There were some young black kids in the front row of the audience, and watching them watching us and the soloists and the orchestra—all a rainbow of people—well, it was joyous.

Many times, I've been grateful to have the Chorus as an antidote to world events. In 1992, as the Los Angeles riots erupted after the acquittal of the police officers who beat Rodney King, the Chorus was holding a sing-a-long in a local church. Singing together in such a diverse group reminded us that people of all backgrounds can come together in positive ways.

Last December, I was one of a small group of Chorus members singing carols at Rosie's Place. Some of the women there joined us in the singing, and many told us how nice it was to have us visit.

For me, the magic of the Chorus is not only about getting better musically, but also about the experience of singing and having fun together. Music transcends so much, and to have a place for so many different people to come together around music is something that I cherish.

An Ambitious Commission and a World Premiere: Luis Bacalov's The Cambridge Psalms, 2006

Community choruses rarely get the chance to present a world premiere of any kind. But for such a group to give the first performance of a major work by an internationally acclaimed composer is remarkable. Under Music Director William Thomas, the Cambridge Community Chorus pulled off this feat by commissioning and performing Luis Bacalov's *Cantos para Nuestros Tiempos (Songs for Our Times): The Cambridge Psalms*, at Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, on Sunday, May 21, 2006, in the presence of Maestro Bacalov.

The warm relationship between the Chorus and the Argentine-born composer, who won an Oscar in 1995 for the score of the film *Il Postino*, began in 2002, when the group presented the North American premiere of his *Misa Tango*. "During rehearsals leading to the performance of *Misa Tango*, we began to discuss other possible projects with Maestro Bacalov," said Thomas. The festive atmosphere surrounding the performance weekend—there were two large house parties, one featuring tango lessons in alto section-leader Stephanie Engel's home—also no doubt helped further this creative collaboration.

With generous sponsorship from the Cambridge business community, the Cambridge Arts Council, Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Alfred Nash Patterson Fund, the Ratshesky Foundation, and over 100 singers and their families, under the leadership of David Pap and Susan Dowds the CCC raised more than \$15,000 to cover the cost of commissioning a new work, and bringing the composer to Cambridge for the premiere.

The resulting commission in fall 2004 gave Bacalov the impetus to realize a project he had long had in mind: a choral setting of texts from the Psalms.



The composer and the conductor worked on the score right up until the last minute.

Written for chorus, soloists and orchestra, the *Cantos* set texts from Old Testament psalms in Spanish, Italian, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic and English to accessible, culturally wide-ranging music that is by turn lyrical and dramatic.

The overarching theme of the piece, said Bacalov in an interview with the writer of the concert program notes, is the opposition between the forces of tyranny, oppression and dictatorship on one hand, and the power of compassion, hope and the glory of the universe on the other. By using several languages, he hoped to underscore a human commonality in the face of this universal tension.

"The score literally dances," said Thomas. "Bacalov's writing is outstanding for its rich orchestration and rhythmic expressiveness. His music is very appealing. It's something you can connect to on the first hearing. However, the music also has many layers of complexity, which we found in both *Misa Tango* and the *Cantos*."

Many singers at first struggled mightily with the multiple languages and the challenging shifting meter. Alto Sabra Lee was new to the Chorus when the scores were handed out, the ink barely dry. As Lee recalls, "It was the hardest music I had ever sung. It changed languages, key signatures and tempos. For a while I couldn't even tell if I was singing the right notes because the music was so unusual and inharmonious, and I didn't really like it." But after months of wrestling with the unfamiliar material, Lee says that in the end she "came to love the music and our performance of it."

"We had a ton of extra rehearsals, which no one seemed to mind," said soprano Emily Achtenburg. At one of those sectional practices, soprano Kathryn Kirshner recalls thinking "how challenging but beautiful the music was." Later she came to see preparing and singing the piece as "one of the most powerful emotional/musical experiences" of her entire Chorus career. Alto Ann Elliot-Holmes remembered that the first time the composer heard the work in rehearsal, "he frowned a lot, so we were rather nervous, and he kept writing in new notes until concert time!" Even the normally imperturbable William Thomas felt the tension. "I don't think I ever thought I would see William so nervous about a piece of music!" recalled tenor Kathy Williams.

Baritone soloist Marcus DeLoach shared his memories of the performance in an email. "It was an honor to be included in the premiere," he wrote. "I do remember the composer being very enamored of the soprano soloist, [Barbara Kilduff] who sang beautifully. As with everything, William made the experience a joy to be a part of. I also



The conductor and composer relax at the party following the successful concert.

remember he had his score marked up with multi-colored numbers and hairpins the size of street signs, as the piece was rhythmically challenging, and he was having trouble reading it. Unlike *Messiah*, this wasn't one he could do from memory!"

Inspired by a sterling trio of soloists, DeLoach, Kilduff, and alto Krista River, and a 47-piece orchestra, the Chorus rose to the challenge in the performance. Argentine friends of Emily Achtenberg told her that the ominous first movement, 'De Imprecaciones,' with its text about the wicked preying on the poor and innocent, sent shivers down their spines. The encore of the stirring Finale brought the house to its feet in a spontaneous standing ovation. The rest of the weekend was a non-stop celebration, ending with a grand party at the house of John Winthrop and Emily Bailey, with William Thomas and Luis Bacalov sharing drinks and compliments, and as Kathryn Kirshner put it, "radiating their musical personalities."

Soprano and MFA conservator Lydia Vagts provides a coda to the whole experience. "I had the pleasure of escorting Mr. Bacalov around the MFA the day after the concert," she remembers, and "the first thing we did was get coffee and something for him to eat." The composer admitted that he hadn't been able to eat since the dress rehearsal "because he was convinced the concert was going to be a disaster!" Happily, Vagts was able to report, like everyone else, Maestro Bacalov was in the end "relieved and pleased with how it had turned out!"

Voices from the Chorus

Barbara Kilduff, soprano soloist



Barbara Kilduff, an internationally acclaimed soprano and colleague of the late William Thomas at Phillips Academy, Andover, remembers the premiere of Bacalov's *Cambridge Psalms*, on May 21, 2006, in which she sang the soprano solo.

"On the day of the premiere, I recall that there was much excitement in the air because (1) the piece, I believe, had been specially commissioned for the Cambridge Community Chorus and (2) the illustrious composer, Luis Bacalov, (composer of the music for the wonderful movie *Il Postino*) would be in attendance. Discussions about phrasing went on right until the last minute. The serene demeanor and reassuring smile of conductor William Thomas imposed firm control, which resulted in a sparkling performance.

I still have the souvenir hat from that day, on which Luis had written 'Thank you to sing so nicely for me.' Then we had the final mad dash with Luis and his companion back to his hotel as he had a train to catch.

I have many happy memories of concerts with William and the Cambridge Community Chorus. Every day I say hello to his portrait, which hangs outside the library of the music department in Graves Hall at Phillips Academy. He was a remarkable man who provided gentle but decisive leadership through his wonderful charisma and charm. He had such love for his music that it was infectious and inspired all those who came in contact with him, students, colleagues and members of the orchestras and choruses he conducted during his long career."



Voices from the Chorus

Penny Peters, alto
President 1996–2001



Singing was always part of my early family life. I sang in high school choruses, hymns at church, Christmas carols, folk songs, and even WWII songs our father taught us. But not choral music. That began in 1992 when my friend Rena Leib encouraged me to join the Chorus. In no time, I was hooked. In 1996 I became President and worked alongside William Thomas, our beloved, funny, charismatic music director, producing concerts, organizing, designing posters and programs, and putting out fires. Being president of the chorus is like running a small business, but instead of employees we have volunteers, the backbone of the Chorus. William believed nothing was impossible; I felt I was the voice of restraint and practicality. Ha! Guess who usually prevailed! Exciting things happened, including a trip to Japan with 55 chorus members and a commissioned piece from an Oscar-winning composer! Amazing!

For me, special musical memories are the Exodus project and *Dido and Aeneas*, both elaborate productions with dancers and also props designed by my husband, Jim. Our living room was filled with two huge pseudo-Egyptian columns and a giant bird that Jim and alto Grace Peters constructed and painted for Exodus. Another highlight was the North American premiere of *Misa Tango*. We organized a festive potluck dinner/fundraiser complete with tango lessons given by the Boston Tango Society, which was great fun. The speed, the complexity of the rhythms, and the coordination needed just to stay on our feet, surprised us all.

The most important aspect of the chorus to me, aside from the wonderful music, has been getting to know so many people I would never otherwise have met. They've all enriched my life.

As the Chorus has grown in reputation, it has become impossible to accept everyone who wants to sing with us—a good problem to have. A practical solution has been to limit the singers in a given season to the number that can fit on the stage of the concert venue for that cycle. To be fair to current singers and hopeful new singers, the Board developed a system whereby those who sang in the last two years were allowed

to register first, after which registration was opened up to other applicants, as long as the voice parts were balanced. There is a now waiting list for some sections—although never for tenors!

MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the life of the Chorus, the ongoing musical development of singers has been a major goal of each music director. Early on, William Thomas proposed a Saturday retreat-rehearsal during each rehearsal cycle. Rena Leib recalls: “I remember our first Saturday retreat. William was determined to meet at Phillips Academy where he taught. What? thought I. All of us traipsing to Andover on a weekend morning? Never! But we did and it was wonderful! We

In order to reach into the community as well as encourage diverse audiences, we have targeted publicity campaigns to particular ethnic or language groups. In 1999 the CCC sang the *Requiem* by the Brazilian composer José Nunes Garcia and we sent publicity announcements to many Portuguese organizations. Latino (and tango) groups received extensive publicity for *Misa Tango* by Luis Bacalov in 2002. We orchestrated an ambitious publicity and educational campaign for *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* by the English-African composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, in 2008. Several displays about the composer, the piece and the Longfellow poem traveled to libraries, schools, city hall and senior centers. A curriculum was developed and there were school visits. We made great efforts to attract an audience of color to hear this spectacular music, which at the beginning of the twentieth century rivaled Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in popularity.

To make concerts accessible to people with limited means, the Chorus donates free concert tickets to groups including seniors, people in nursing homes and those who use homeless shelters and soup kitchens.



Jamie Kirsch
Music Director 2008–2013

When William Thomas announced that he would retire in Spring 2008, the daunting task of finding a successor fell to then Chorus President Janet Rustow and the all-volunteer CCC Board. “It was a tough, difficult process,” said Rustow. “We needed to have someone who was very sure, and very good, and knew what they were doing and how to command attention.”

Supported by a search committee of Chorus members, Rustow spearheaded a hunt that ended in the enthusiastic selection of Jamie Andrew Kirsch. A late entrant in a strong pool of candidates, Kirsch stood out from the start, on paper, on the phone, and in person, said Rustow. “He was obviously a terrifically good teacher, with an extraordinary musical background,” she said. After a landslide of votes in his favor following his rehearsal audition, “It was really clear that he was going to be the right person,” she said.

From that first rehearsal on, Kirsch brought a laser focus and passionate energy that never flagged over his five-year tenure. With degrees from Yale School of Music and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Doctorate in Choral Conducting from Indiana University, he is deeply committed to music education. In an interview soon after his appointment, he said: “my long term goal is to really teach, not just to build vocal ability, but musical ability.” Soon after his CCC appointment, he joined the faculty at Tufts University, as Director of Choral Activities.

Alto section leader Stephanie Engel was by no means the only singer to worry that no incoming music director could fill William Thomas's shoes. But as she recalled: “Jamie did not try to. He was half William's age, half his size and had other shoes in mind.” From the start, Engel realized, Kirsch had his own agenda for helping the Chorus “grow as musicians, challenge us to new repertoire, and new ways of doing things.” An outward sign of the new regime was a different seating plan for rehearsals. As Engel remembers: “Rather than sitting in long rows, all facing the music director, we were suddenly in two phalanxes facing each other, with the aim of watching and listening to the other voices, to improve intonation and ensemble singing. And it worked. We got better.”

Kirsch was keen to move the Chorus on from its *Messiah*-centric programming, and introduce more contemporary, twentieth-century and non-European works. But first he rose to the challenge of directing his first-ever complete



performance of Handel's oratorio in December 2009. “A fine performance of a great piece,” wrote Boston Intelligencer critic David Griesinger. “Jamie Kirsch conducted with enormous energy, dancing on the podium with huge gestures, pulling the whole show along with grace and vitality.”

His first program for the winter concert in 2008 included Gwyneth Walker's *Rejoice!*, the first work by a woman composer to enter the Chorus's repertoire,

and in December 2010 he programmed Argentine composer Ariel Ramirez's *Navidad Nuestra* (1965), accompanied by a mariachi-style band, between a Bach cantata and Mozart's *Coronation Mass*.

While some singers regretted the break with the annual *Messiah* tradition, many welcomed the change. “The concert this winter is a fantastic mix of engaging music that will appeal to everyone,” said alto Miriam Mandell. “Ramirez's version of the Christmas story is less religious and more ‘of the people’ than other Christmas works, which makes it appealing to a broad audience,” said bass David Pap.

As CCC assistant conductor for two years, Michael Pfitzer had a close professional working relationship with Kirsch. “One of the things I really admired about Jamie's work with the Chorus,” he said, “was that he was focused on getting a mix of interesting repertoire, that would challenge the Chorus at the appropriate level. Kirsch did not shy away from hard pieces, but saw them as learning opportunities. He would clearly state what he wanted us to do, and would give us as many tools as he could to help us get there, and that's an important and somewhat rare quality in a community chorus director.”

When Kirsch left CCC in 2013, after five productive and growth-filled years, he became the sixth music director of Boston-based Chorus pro Musica, a highly-regarded auditioned amateur choir known through New England for innovative programming and professional-level performance standards. “Jamie was great—he's obviously a star, with a very bright future, and we were lucky to have him for so long,” said Janet Rustow. Reflecting the thoughts of many parents of sons in the Chorus, Stephanie Engel put it this way: “Our boy grew up and left us with many gifts and memories. And, like the best of sons, he only moved across town.”

Voices from the Chorus

Paul Raila, tenor
President 2001-2006



My first serious singing was when my voice changed to the tenor range. My mother was an organist and choir director in Baltimore, so I was shanghaied for Thursday night rehearsals and paid off with cheeseburgers. My mother's gift of music, I consider one of her greatest gifts to me.

At MIT I sang with the Logarithms, a men's close harmony small ensemble. In that group there were four of us who sang together as a quartet, who still sing together to this day as The Backlogs. We do any kind of a capella stuff—barber shop, spirituals, pop, great American songbook. It's very special—the voices blend, the personalities blend and I'm so grateful for the friendship and the music. When I come back from a weekend of rehearsing together, I feel like the luckiest guy in the world.

I have a friend who sang with the Chorus for a brief period and she thought I might enjoy this particular group, and its music director, so I went. Quite honestly, my first love is chamber music. So the Chorus is not the best fit in that regard, but it violates all the statistical averages in terms of the number of intelligent, charming, interesting people. It's a very interesting group with a very good spirit—very collaborative and communal in many ways.

I did very much enjoy the Jenkins (*The Peacemakers*), musically, for the diversity of styles, and intellectually, because it represented ideas of peace, harmony, co-operation; a hopeful contemplation of the world which is so welcome in the face of our current political climate.



Jamie Kirsch in rehearsal. "He had high expectations for us, which made us reach new levels—and he'd give us as many tools as he could to help us get there." (Mike Pfitzer)

William offered many opportunities for small groups of singers to solo in concerts. He pushed, pulled and prodded to get volunteers. At first this was terrifying, but he knew it was a wonderful way to instill confidence. Not that we were very good at the beginning, but we became less self-conscious as the years went by. The roles in the opera *Dido and Aeneas* really gave our singers an opportunity to shine. It has been exciting to witness how many in the Chorus now volunteer to solo or participate in small groups. Jamie, Mike and Pam have all encouraged small group solos and provided extra time to practice before regular rehearsals.

Voice classes have been another way to learn basic vocal techniques and develop comfort singing in front of a small group. Starting in 1995, a series of voice classes was offered in winter and summer for a modest fee, with scholarships available. When Jamie became the music director, he also gave voice classes during several summers.

We have benefitted from living in the Boston area, home to so many exceptional musicians. When the Chorus performed the Robert Levin completion of Mozart's *Requiem*, William arranged for the renowned pianist to speak and demonstrate at a rehearsal. Jamie brought in an expert in the mechanics of the voice. This past fall, Pam enlisted baritone Tom Jones to give several group classes on improving vocal technique and breathing that were very popular and well received.

Some years ago, section leaders started taking the initiative to organize extra sectional rehearsals, led by one of our talented accompanists. When we are learning a particularly challenging piece of music, these sessions, held outside of our regular

worked hard in the morning and after lunch, before heading home, we drove to nearby Smolak Farms for cider donuts. From then on, Andover became the rehearsal-retreat site of choice." Retreats were a way to explore the music in depth and, best of all, to get to know each other better. Singers carpooled, gathered together at lunch, and strolled the beautiful grounds or visited the Art Museum. The retreats are still an integral part of our rehearsal schedule, even though we stay right in Cambridge.

In the early years, very few singers in the Cambridge Community Chorus had any vocal training. An informal poll showed that most had last sung in a high school chorus or in church. Several singers did not read music and new singers joined the group every year and had to be brought up to speed for *Messiah* concerts. Every effort was made to aid singers in learning their parts. Tapes (yes, tapes) and later CDs of individual voice parts were made and were—and still are—excellent tools for practice. (Now Pam sends us practice mp3s which we can access on the CCC website.) William sought out those singers who needed a little extra help and came early to rehearsals to work with them.

schedule, are a great way to raise the musical bar, and allow singers within a section to get to know one another better.

The Chorus has improved steadily over the years as long-time singers have improved with experience and training, and new singers with more vocal experience have joined the group. While the *Messiah* is a difficult work, Chorus members singing it year after year became secure in the notes and William could focus more on the dynamics and subtleties of the piece. With the addition of new and challenging repertoire most singers have improved their sight-reading and vocal fluency. Jamie Kirsch initiated the practice of 'voicing,' which Pam continued when she became music director. This means that the music director listens to every singer for a few minutes to become familiar with the qualities of each individual voice, to check that singers are in the correct voice part, and to help achieve a balanced sound.

BEHIND THE SCENES: RUNNING THE CHORUS

From the president down, the Cambridge Community Chorus runs on countless hours of volunteer effort on the part of officers, board members and many others. According to the incorporation by-laws, the Chorus is required to have a Board and three specified officers: president, clerk and treasurer. Over the years, when circumstances called for it, the Board has chosen a vice-president to assist the president. Board meetings are held regularly during the year with one summer meeting. Anyone can attend board meetings, although only board members can vote. Elections of officers and board members are held annually in the spring.

During the long tenure of William Thomas, founding president Rena Leib served for five years, 1991-1996, and her successors Penny Peters (1996-2001) and Paul Raila (2001-2006) each served five-year terms. As president from 2006-2009, Janet Rustow led CCC through the transition when William retired in 2008, followed by Jim Hickey from 2009-2011, and Heather Tuttle, who stepped up from her preferred behind-the-scenes positions as clerk and vice-president to take on the leading role for a short but crucial term from 2011-2012. John Winslow will finish his four-year stint in May 2016, having successfully steered the Chorus through its second change of music director. Presidents spend hours every day on Chorus business through the entire singing season, and no matter how long or short their tenure, their contributions



Baritone Tom Jones demonstrates vocal technique to Chorus singers.

Voices from the Chorus

Lois Josimovich, soprano



I've sung along with everything from bluegrass to opera since I was a kid, but living with a professional diva roommate at one point killed any confidence I'd earned from junior high school choir. Lured by a friend to my first CCC rehearsal in early 2001, I was quickly put at ease by fellow singers who told me not to worry about it. I was completely mesmerized by our inimitable founding Music Director, William Thomas, and decided right after his first couple of wisecracks and the opening phrases of Bach and Fauré that this was the place for me if I could just keep up.

I was even more convinced after my first concert, and again that September when we came together for our first rehearsal just after 9/11 and sang for healing. I fell in love with almost every piece we've sung since then, and the most challenging composers became favorites. Ralph Vaughan Williams' moving *Dona Nobis Pacem*, the Brahms *German Requiem* we sang with other choruses after the Boston Marathon bombing, the *Messiah* we performed in Tokyo, and our Exodus concert with its dance components were some personal high points.

The reputations and dynamism of all our directors and the hard work of our volunteer members have earned us the privilege of working with wonderful musicians and world class soloists like Robert Honeysucker, Teresa Wakim, and Barbara Kilduff, whose first notes in Luis Bacalov's *Cambridge Psalms* fell like drops of rain on the desert. And another thing. During my second year with the Chorus, I met my significant other, David Pap, who sings bass.

Voices from the Chorus

Mary Keith, alto

Growing up, I never thought of myself as a singer, but as a musician, mainly. I started playing the piano by ear at four years old. I listened to music on the radio and I'd play what I heard on the three upright pianos we had. In my mother's family everyone played an instrument. So she encouraged each of us girls to play the piano. I also played flute, and my other two sisters played violin.

Before joining CCC, I belonged to a local chorus that was dedicated to singing music by Black classical composers and also Negro spirituals. In 2000 Edith Walker, with whom I'd grown up from kindergarten, had recently joined the Chorus and invited me. I believe I arrived in the middle of rehearsals for the *Messiah*, which I knew, but had never sung. It was very exciting for me because I enjoy challenging music.

Singing in the Chorus has helped me to improve my voice. My vocal challenges are breath control, and transitioning between the different ranges. Pam has provided helpful techniques, like squeezing our hands together tightly when we reach a point where our voices may crack or break.

The Chorus has changed since I joined. When I started, there were many more people of color and, I think, due to natural attrition, there are now fewer. But we are more diverse in other ways. Younger people have joined and their voices have improved all the sections. We are also attracting other ethnic groups which reflects the diversity in our communities.

I would like to travel again with the Chorus. Before joining this group, I had never been far from home. Thanks to our founding director, William Thomas, I have been able to travel to places only once dreamt about. Next stop, Cuba?



have all been crucial to the flourishing of the Chorus.

The professional music director is the pivotal position in the Cambridge Community Chorus. He or she must work closely with the officers and the Board on almost a daily basis to keep things running smoothly. All the music directors have chosen the music for each concert, but have taken different approaches to hiring our orchestras. William Thomas and Pam Mindell hired all the orchestra musicians personally, while Jamie Kirsch and Mike Pfitzer had assistance from Mary Jaffee and others when assembling their rosters.

As running the Chorus became more complex, an Executive Committee was formed in about our tenth year to confer before each board meeting and to make decisions between board meetings. For important decisions between meetings, the Board is sometimes polled by phone or email. Until 2008 the Executive Committee consisted of the past presidents and the music director. It then evolved into what it is today: the officers, music director and committee chairs as needed.

Committees are formed as needed. Each year a nominating committee proposes officers and new board members. There are standing committees such as Fundraising and Publicity, and special committees are formed as needed. Specific projects often require committees,

such as the Japan trip in 2002 and the special events that accompanied the Bacalov concerts. In terms of time commitment and the importance of the task, perhaps the most demanding and rewarding of all committees to serve on have been the search committees convened when we have needed to hire a new music director.

As the Chorus grew, it became increasingly difficult to depend only on volunteers. In 2012 a part-time staff person, Liz Smith, was hired to take on some of the many tasks previously done by the officers and many volunteers. Tracy Kukkonen is now our extremely able and organized administrative assistant. She offers support to the board, its committees and the music director; collects singer dues and score payments, assists with annual fundraising, PR, the website, and concert production. She handles ticket sales, comp ticket distribution, and does event planning. She keeps the singer roster current, manages mailing lists, prepares and proofs components for the program designer, buys supplies and answers zillions of emails. This (nominally) 10-hour a week job has been a lifesaver for the president, the board and the music director.

The Chorus has been pulled into the Internet era along with everyone else. While we used to reach our singers and audiences by mail and telephone, now the emails fly, the music director can communicate directly with every singer, and chorus members

The Chorus in Japan

After performing our *Messiah* concert in Cambridge on December 8, 2002, a group of sixty-three people—fifty-three of them singers or soloists—packed up and left for Japan the next day. After months of planning and fundraising, our adventure began.

Thanks to his connections in Japan through past collaborations with Phillips Academy, our conductor William Thomas had arranged for the Chorus to sing the *Messiah* in Tokyo with the Messiah Messengers, a local group that regularly sings the piece. In keeping with the philosophy of the Chorus, many people contributed so that we could offer financial help to singers who wanted to go but were unable to afford the entire cost of the trip.

Our welcome could not have been more wonderful. On our first morning, our Japanese hosts took small groups of Chorus members on a city tour via subway. One of our hosts had even slept in his office the night before in order to be on time. We learned how to use the subway and we visited the Imperial Place and other sights. "The whole trip, recalls CCC founding member Florence Grant, "was phenomenal." The excitement and camaraderie trumped everything, including the day-for-night time shift, the language gap and the very different cultures.

William was the conductor for the performance, and we plunged right in with a rehearsal the evening we arrived. CCC members and Japanese singers sat side by side, all mixed together, and the music making began. Florence Grant recalls the moment. "When we got together with the Japanese chorus, it was just out of this world! Because these people had these wonderful voices—they were so good," she says. Then on Saturday, December 14, our joint performance of the *Messiah* took place at Showa Woman's University Hitomi Memorial Hall. After the concert there



Phyllis Rawlins, Patricia Dance, Rena Leib and Carol Folkes-Youens take in the sights of Tokyo.

was a party with wonderful food, singing and the traditional giving of gifts—CCC singers gave red commemorative t-shirts to their hosts in return for exquisite hand-made business card holders.

While we were there, CCC members had more opportunities to sightsee in Tokyo, following our subway initiation. A delegation, including then Cambridge Mayor Ken Reeves, visited Tsukuba, a small town near Tokyo that is a sister city with Cambridge. After the concert some of the group went on to Kyoto, others went to Hawaii and some went directly back to Boston. All of us who went to Japan were enriched by being in another country, meeting singers there, and joining with them for a concert that everyone enjoyed tremendously.



Singing carols with our Japanese choral hosts after the *Messiah* concert.

**Michael Pfitzer, Interim
Music Director 2013–2014**

When Michael Pfitzer joined the CCC in fall 2011, he was a welcome addition to the tenor section. It was clear from the start that he was a trained and talented singer. Though he never advertised the fact, he had just returned to Boston with an M.M. degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, to add to his B.A. in Music and History from Tufts.

Over the following seasons, the Chorus came to appreciate the full range of his gifts and experience, as he acted first as unpaid assistant conductor to Music Director Jamie Kirsch, then as paid administrator/assistant conductor for the 2012-13 season. “The way Jamie encouraged me in my own music making and development was remarkable,” said Pfitzer in a recent interview. “He helped guide and shape the way I was thinking about rehearsal, and performances, and concert planning,” he said, providing invaluable background for Pfitzer’s current studies in the D.M.A. program in conducting at Boston University.

Following Kirsch’s decision to leave CCC in spring 2013 to take up the leadership of Chorus pro Musica, the CCC Board decided to appoint an interim director for the 2013-14 season, to allow time for a search for a new permanent director. Pfitzer stood out for his previous experience with community choruses as well as for his recent work with the Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus and CCC, said CCC President John Winslow. Praising the “strong and focused discipline” that underlies Pfitzer’s pleasant and approachable manner, Winslow added: “Mike has a solid and diligent command of a broad range of choral music and will bring this to bear in our programming for next year.” Kirsch said at the time: “I’m thrilled Mike has accepted the interim position as CCC’s music director. He’s an outstanding musician and teacher with enormous energy. CCC is lucky to have him.”

Pfitzer needed all his talents and energy to meet the ambitious schedule for 2013-14—already planned by Kirsch—in addition to his other jobs as Choral Associate at Harvard University, and as Director of Music at First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, in Stow, Mass. On top of the CCC regular winter and spring concerts, and annual participation in the Cambridge Holocaust Remembrance, he prepared the Chorus for performances of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, with Boston Civic Symphony, and choruses from *Tosca*, with Cambridge Symphony Orchestra.



“It was hard to learn and execute all of that music,” Pfitzer admitted. “It was a challenge,” he said, “but getting to work with as many groups as we did, doing as much repertoire as we did, that was really interesting and fun, and a great joy.” Many singers appreciated his gift for turning a challenge into a joyful adventure. “I think the Chorus really appreciated his upbeat leadership style, his sense of humor and his way of giving us praise and encouragement,” said alto Ann Elliott-Holmes.

Even his warm-up exercises were fun. A favorite, to show the difference between staccato and legato singing, involved pre-

tending to tell off his dog, with a stern, finger-wagging “NO! NO! NO! NO!” sung on a downward arpeggio, alternating with a soothing, gentle “Nooooooo.” Pfitzer also opened singers’ eyes to the larger artistic choices that shape performances. “I remember particularly his bringing several very different recordings of a single passage we were working on in the *Messiah*,” said tenor Mary Baine Campbell. “He played them one after another to show us how different in mood and rhythmic address they were, and it really helped us to get what he wanted us to do, by demonstrating how different the alternative decisions sounded.”

Looking back on his tenure as CCC interim director, Pfitzer sees many professional and personal benefits. “Being the sole director of a large group like that was certainly a great experience for me. In the life of a young professional musician, with its anxieties about career paths and job prospects, the Chorus provided a kind of anchor,” he said. “Coming to rehearsal every Monday night and getting to lead the concerts and be with all of you, it really helped me to feel like I was doing the right thing, which is an experience I’m really grateful for.”



send out concert announcements to their friends over the web. The chorus website is an excellent repository of information, both historical and informational. One volunteer has set up a Facebook page. The Chorus recently purchased a brand new database that is now up and running. It has a huge capacity to store information, allowing us to send targeted emails and letters and track donations. The Internet has made a big difference to the Chorus in the way we attract new singers, especially young singers. Now anyone who moves to Cambridge and wants to sing in a local chorus can find us on the web.

THE MONEY BEHIND THE MUSIC

For the first years of the Chorus, finances were handled by the Cambridge Arts Council (CAC), which had helped us get started. During that time, Tower Records, new in Harvard Square, donated \$5,000 for each of two years. Then the Chorus organizers decided it would be better to be independent of the CAC and make our own choices and plans. With the help of a pro bono lawyer (Dan Danielson of Foley, Hoag and Elliot, who was a friend of a Chorus member and had enjoyed our concerts), we worked to decide the organizational structure for the Chorus and applied to be a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. That status was granted to the CCC in April 1993.

To get started financially, the core group of organizers each chipped in some money, with contributions ranging from \$10 to \$50. This set the stage for the next years of the CCC. With the goal of accessibility for everyone regardless of financial means, there was no requirement for dues, and singers were asked to make a voluntary contribution of any amount annually. At concerts we asked only for a suggested donation. Even the scores were paid for on a voluntary basis; there was a suggested donation based on the cost of the scores and some people paid that amount, some paid less, and some donated extra. People were very generous and this worked well for many years.

Donations from singers and audience members have never covered all the expenses of producing a concert. Initially, many of us had no idea how much was involved in presenting a concert, and even less experience with grant writing. But the desire to keep the Chorus going made us take on these new challenges. Research about which places might grant money to groups like ours led us to apply to the Blossom Fund. Guidelines were read carefully, narratives written, and all was sent off, with fingers crossed.

“I remember the day of our “works-in-progress” concert in October 1995 at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Council,” says Rena Leib.

Voices from the Chorus

**Janet Rustow alto
President, 2006–2009**



I had lived in Cambridge for a while, but never worked there, and I was eager to make more Cambridge connections. Around 1994, I went with a friend to a small Chorus concert and it seemed like a very friendly, open kind of group, so we signed up. We used to do *Messiah* in winter. Just being in the concert, with the orchestra, and being backstage, and seeing the whole thing come together was so exciting. My stepfather was a conductor of an orchestra in New York, so I grew up going to concerts, and with classical music blaring through the house, but I never stuck with piano. It was thrilling to be part of a performance in Kresge, so I was pretty hooked. I sang in every concert for nineteen, twenty years, something like that. It was a very big piece of my life.

My daughter Nina started playing violin at age five and I became a Suzuki violin mom. Her first paid gig as a teenager was playing in the orchestra for the Chorus, hired by William (Thomas). That was incredibly thrilling for her. And for me to be on stage singing and see her playing the violin was very, very special. William was incredibly supportive to her and to other kids and gave them opportunities that they would never have had otherwise.

As someone who searched for some religious group to affiliate with and never quite found one that I felt really at home with, the Chorus was in many ways like a congregation—it was a group of people that cared about each other, that had a common love of music and community, and looked out for each other.



Win-win at the WGBH fundraiser. Singers volunteer in exchange for getting our concert mentioned on the air.

would not be able to provide long-term support. So we applied for half the amount the next year, with the agreement that we would not apply again, but knowing that losing such a large (for us) grant would be hard to make up. They agreed with this, and funded us for the smaller grant.

Our budget for 1994, our first full year as an independent organization, was about \$16,000, of which the largest expenses were for the conductor, accompanist, orchestra

and soloists, as well as space rental. Most of the money came from voluntary member donations, support from local businesses, donations at concerts, and grants from the Ratchesky Foundation, the Blossom Fund, the Polaroid Foundation, and the City of Cambridge

For several years the Chorus received organizational support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, although the amounts were cut as funding for the arts dwindled and the MCC changed their funding focus. While the Cambridge Arts Council does not give organizational support, we did apply for and receive several grants for specific projects. The City of Cambridge has continued to support the Chorus with a grant each year.

Over the years, Chorus expenses grew. While William had hired an orchestra composed of semi-professionals (many were his friends and fellow music teachers from Phillips Academy), amateurs and students, when Jamie became the Music Director, he began using more professional musicians. As with many things, this change had pluses and minuses. On the one hand the quality of musicianship definitely improved. On the other hand, some of the community flavor and diversity of the earlier orchestras was lost.

As expenses increased, there was a renewed debate within the Board about whether or not the Chorus should require dues. In 2012, it was decided

“We had no idea how we were going to be able to pay the conductor and musicians, even for such a small event. Stopping at the Post Office to check our mailbox, I found an envelope from the Blossom Fund. As I opened it, my worries turned to delight, because not only had they approved our grant for \$6,000, but the check was right there in the envelope! Many groups send an approval letter and then you have to sign a contract, but here was the check, right there with the approval. What a relief!”

The Blossom Fund turned out to be extremely helpful in other ways. They gave us \$6,000 two years in a row, but then let us know, in the second approval letter, that they only give start-up money, and

Voices from the Chorus

Ken McElheny, bass

I'm the son of a musician and music teacher, and I've always loved music, especially early music. I tried piano lessons in my late teens and got bored, took guitar lessons, but didn't pursue that, so I thought it would be fun to do part-singing. I hate auditioning, so a community chorus without auditions was a good way to jump in and the CCC was very responsive to people who just wanted to sing, but would also be willing to learn.

I liked the idea of uniting with the congregation at St. Paul's, as a way of being involved in a more diverse community. And of course William himself was a lot of fun to be around—and he was very, very patient—except sometimes with the sopranos!

Over the years, all the conductors have set up opportunities for classes, for us to work on our singing. One of the biggest challenges I think is how to visualize what's going on when we sing, without being able to consciously control it. I found that Tom Jones' suggestion in his recent workshop—that you envision a column of air, and surf on top of it—helped me a lot.

It's one of the greatest enjoyments in singing that you get to be on the stage with professional soloists, especially when you actually sing with them. Rehearsals are an awful lot of fun. It's wonderful that we get audiences that love what we do, but if it's just a matter of competing for audience approval or critics' approval that's not so much of an incentive for me. It seems to me there's a relative lack of self-importance in the whole operation, in the people who run it, and the people who lead the Chorus, that's really appealing.



Nurturing Young Talent; Making Music Across Generations

Attracting young musicians and singers has been crucial to the mission and vitality of the Cambridge Community Chorus right from the start. The Chorus' very first concert included several parents and their children, including Rena Leib and her daughter Joan who are still both singing with us today.

The Chorus has a long tradition of collaboration with the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Music Department. From 1994-2007 the CRLS Vocal Ensemble—a select group of singers chosen by audition or teacher recommendation—sang songs from their repertoire at our fall works-in-progress concerts. The Ensemble joined the Chorus for spring concerts for five years (1997-2002) in works including the *Lord Nelson Mass*, *St. John Passion*, *Elijah* and *Misa Tango*. The Chorus has also collaborated with youthful choirs from outside Cambridge; in the performance of Benjamin Britten's *St. Nicolas* in December 2012, with the South Hadley Children's Chorus, and Karl Jenkins' *The Peacemakers* in May 2015 with the Worcester Children's Chorus under Pamela Mindell.

Music Director William Thomas introduced the idea of the Young Artists Competition in 1995 in order to encourage music performance by young musicians. The competition was open to singers and instrumentalists who were under the age of 18 and lived or studied music in Cambridge. The top three winners were awarded cash prizes and the 1st place winner performed a solo at a CCC concert. Students from the ages of 12-17 auditioned that first year with very varied offerings, from gospel to jazz drum to classical violin. The Competition continued through 1997. The 1996 winner, Yaeko Miranda Elmaleh, continues to be a professional violinist to this day.



The 1999 Cambridge Choral Scholars with Donnell Patterson.



Singers from CRLS Vocal Ensemble and local churches joined with the Cambridge Community Chorus for a Joyful Noise concert celebrating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1997 William and the Chorus decided to narrow the focus of our involvement to vocal music—a better fit for us—and initiated the Cambridge Choral Scholars program that continued through 2006. William and the Board felt strongly that while student athletes get plenty of recognition in their schools and local communities, “young artists and young musicians also need the right kind of support.” The idea was to give students performance opportunities and encourage their musical growth, and in William's words: “make some noise for these really talented and dedicated young people.”

Auditions were arranged for interested students from the CRLS Vocal Ensemble. The winners, one singer from each vocal part, each received \$100 as well as an opportunity to perform together at a CCC concert. William also engaged professional classical singers to give master classes during Vocal Ensemble classes, where the Choral Scholars would be the featured singers. A highlight for the 1999 Scholars was participation in a class given by Bobby McFerrin at Phillips Academy in Andover.

The CCC has also arranged for master classes at CRLS. Soloist Robert Honeysucker taught a master class in 1997 for the CRLS Vocal Ensemble and this collaboration was re-established in the fall of 2015 when Pam Mindell arranged for baritone Tom Jones to do the same. The Ensemble was also one of the choruses participating in our 25th Anniversary Choral Festival, along with Cantare, the children's chorus of Boston City Singers. “We want to be part of the future of music in our community, and it starts with the kids,” says Pam. “We hope that these opportunities, like the festival, master classes, and scholarship programs, will show kids the value we put on music, and help them keep on singing throughout their lives,” she says. After all, she points out: “They are the future of the Chorus!”

Voices from the Chorus

Mary Jaffee, alto

I learned about CCC from William (Thomas), two years before I joined. I'd been singing in a 12-women group and when it fell apart I joined CCC. I'd never sung the *Messiah* before and, oh my God, it was scary for me but ultimately very satisfying. So many people had sung it before. Jamie (Kirsch) pushed us hard and let us know what he wanted to hear. The way he described the pieces as we started out was inspiring. I was thrilled to be singing.

A high point for me was the Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*. It got so under my skin—I just loved it. Also the Brahms *Requiem*, which I'd loved as an audience member, and was thrilled to get inside that piece.

I really enjoyed being on the search committee for our next director. It was an incredibly well done search, ending with strong candidates. I was in favor of Pam (Mindell) as soon as I saw the video of her working with a chorus—so dynamic, and so completely engaged with the group.

I love the open door policy of the Chorus, making it available for everybody who wants to sing. I wish it included more people of color.



Howard Bernstein, tenor

I joined the Chorus about five years ago. I was noodling around on the Internet looking for things to join and get involved in. I found the Chorus through the Greater Boston Choral Consortium website. I like singing and have done a lot of it, and the Cambridge Chorus was close to home. I checked out the CCC's website and registered right away for the next season.

I've enjoyed everything about the Chorus—the music is challenging without being impossible. It's good music at the right level. I've gotten to know some people that I would not have met if I hadn't joined. And I love the dinners after rehearsal.

I found *The Peacemakers* especially interesting because I enjoy studying different religions. I liked that it was contemporary and that is interesting to me. I've also liked the Fauré *Requiem*, and in general I've liked everything we've learned, and the directors we've had. It's been a good thing for me.

I've definitely become a better singer over the last five years. My sight-reading has improved. I probably don't practice as much as I should but I still invite people to the concerts. It's nice for people to see what you've been doing in your life.



Vida Kazemi, alto

When I was in 9th grade in Iran, our chorus teacher would have us sing songs from different places—*Sakura* from Japan, the *Song of the Volga Boatmen*—that kind of thing. I came to the States in 1962 from Tehran and my boarding school in Denver had a little chorus and we had to sing carols, and *God Bless America*.

I met Barret (Brown) in the gym in Cambridge, and she told me she was singing in this chorus and how much fun it was. I was also friends with Emily (Bailey), and I told them, "I don't know how to sing," and they said, "It doesn't matter!" So I took some voice lessons for about five months before starting the chorus. Initially I would try to sing very softly. The first thing I sang was *Messiah*, which was not a good place to start your career. I told Jamie (Kirsch), "I only know some parts." I asked him, "Should I participate in the concert?" "Sure," he said, "just move your mouth."

I've found most of the pieces difficult—timing and rhythm are hard. I loved the Ramirez *Navidad Nuestra*—it was so bouncy! With the Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem* I started by not liking the music, and then I became very attached. I was very moved by the first Holocaust Memorial I took part in, because I'd never been to one before.

I try to practice when I have time. I mark the parts that are hard and the next time I try to work on those. Sometimes I screech in the car as a warm-up exercise. I think singing in general with a group is exhilarating, and I like the connections that have developed through the chorus.



Miriam Mandell, alto

When I moved back to Cambridge in 2007, my friend Lisa convinced me to join the Chorus. Though I wanted to connect with the community in a way that made it feel like home, I was initially hesitant. I could not imagine committing to be in the same place every Monday night until 9:30—well past the time I usually crawl into bed. I was immediately taken with the whole thing—I loved meeting in the church, seeing so many new faces, and feeling like a part of something bigger than myself. I discovered that choral singing is a team sport, and love being inside—the only words I can use—the beauty in every piece we sing. The Chorus is now an integral part of my life and I look forward to seeing everyone each week.

I was incredibly nervous for my first performance. It was the *Messiah*, which most of the Chorus already knew well, and I was thankful for the comfort of the other voices. Since then, I've noticed a turning point in each season, where I've absorbed the music to the point of feeling surprised at how well I know it. Each season I get a little more confident.

I was especially moved after the Marathon bombing when many local choruses came together to sing the Brahms *Requiem*. On its own the music is beautiful, but the experience of having the music bring strangers together after this tragedy was enormous.

I'm grateful for the chorus and the wonderful people I've gotten to know through it. I love music and having this community of singers that I can call "mine" makes me feel part of something bigger than myself.



Celia Gomez, soprano

Music and dance was a huge thing in my upbringing—there was a time when I thought I wanted to be on Broadway, to be a professional dancer—and in college I was in a dance company and sang with an a capella group that traveled internationally. I probably spent more time singing and dancing than studying! But once I started doctoral work that was pretty much all-consuming. By the fifth year of grad school, I felt like there was this huge void, this huge part of myself that I had lost, because I wasn't able to express myself artistically, and I thought, something's got to change!

I had sung with one or two other community choruses that I didn't stay long with, in part because they were not well organized. I remember walking into my first Chorus rehearsal and going through the warm-up, getting the music, and feeling like, these people know what they're doing, but they're not taking themselves too seriously.

I was so impressed by the concerts, especially the Beethoven *Mass*. I don't think I understood, until we had our first dress rehearsal, what it would be like to have a big orchestra. It's really awesome that there are the resources to do that.

There were times when I felt in the minority because of my age, but I've really valued the quality of the Chorus, and people's commitment to the community, to the music, to each other, and the organization.

I'll come to rehearsal after a day working in my office, and having the chance to sing just makes me feel much more like who I think I am—it's part of my soul.



Sabra Lee, alto

I wanted to sing again after many years. Stephanie (Engel) told me about the CCC, which sounded like a great fit and I decided to join. I quickly wondered what I had gotten myself into. We were singing a commissioned piece by Luis Bacalov that was the hardest music I had ever sung. It changed languages, key signatures and tempo throughout the piece. For a while I couldn't even tell if I was singing the right notes because the music was so unusual and inharmonious, and I didn't really like it. I came to love the music and our performance of it.

Throughout the season I listen to CDs of the music several times a day, until I feel the music in my blood and anticipate what's coming next. In the last week of rehearsals before the concert, I inevitably think our performance will be terrible, even after our dress rehearsal and our before-the-concert practice with the orchestra. But we always pull it off and I feel relieved. This happens again and again: I don't seem to believe it the next time.

There is a moment in many choral pieces when I get so choked up I fear I'll cry on stage!



Voices from the Chorus

José Castillo, bass

I went to *Dido and Aeneas*, and saw my friend, Phyllis, was there. So, I thought I would ask her how I can go to join the choir. The first concert I sang was the Mozart *Requiem* with William.

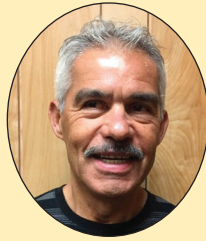
William was great, very great, very professional, and I liked him. I felt very comfortable with William and the music, like the *Messiah*. Oh my God, talk about funny: I remember one of the sopranos, she made a mistake and he went down and sat on her lap. I remember that.

In Costa Rica, I studied singing and I sang with the Costa Rica Symphony Orchestra choir for ten years and I sang opera in the choir. I studied at the university, some technique. When I came to Boston, I sang in a chapel and then I auditioned with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. So they invited me and I sang with them for ten years, from 1997 to 2007, but only at Christmas. The Cambridge Community Chorus is more like family. I don't know, everybody is like a brother or sister.

To prepare, I have a CD and I put it in my car so I can study every day and in my house, too. When I go to work I memorize a little bit, so at rehearsal I can remember a part.

One of the best pieces for me was *The Peacemakers*, that we did last spring with Pam. Oh my God, what a great piece.

A big challenge would be singing solo. I would like to sing by myself more—I'd love to do some opera. And I hope there will be a chance in the future to travel with the Chorus.



that dues would be the best way to insure financial stability. A system was put in place to offer financial help to those who would not be able to pay the full amount.

In addition to donations from singers, friends and businesses, new fundraising efforts have been developed. An annual online auction of donated items has provided a good part of our income each year. There have been raffles at rehearsals, fundraising parties, and other efforts including soliciting ads for our concert programs.

Our annual budgets have grown as the Chorus has expanded and costs have increased. For example, while a student or semi-professional violinist might have been paid \$150 for two rehearsals and the concert in the early years, a professional violinist now receives around \$450, and similar increases apply across the orchestra. As of our winter 2015 concert, the Chorus is now paying official union wages. The biggest expenses remain the same: music director, accompanist, orchestra, soloists, and space rental. One additional expense, the part-time administrator, was added in 2012 to help with the ever-growing number of tasks needed to help

the Chorus function smoothly. Now in our 25th year our budget is \$81,600—quite a change from our beginning years!

THE BEDROCK OF THE CHORUS: VOLUNTEERS

With the exception of the music director, accompanist and, more recently, the administrative assistant, the Cambridge Community Chorus has always been run entirely by volunteers. The officers, board members, concert producers, and poster and



Officers are volunteers too! President John Winslow (L), former Vice-President Kathy Williams (C) and former President Paul Raila (R) handle announcements, sign-in and video recording.



program designers are all volunteers. Volunteers set up for rehearsals and concerts (in the early years when we performed in churches), serve as section leaders and committee chairs, organize fundraising, solicit ads, write grants, run the auction, helm the scrip program, write press releases and articles, take photos, videotape rehearsals, organize mailings and stuff envelopes. Volunteers host parties, sectional rehearsals and voice classes, create and maintain the Chorus website and Facebook page, organize special events such as the *Messiah* Sing and holiday visits to nursing homes, bring water and poinsettias for the December concerts, staff the ticket tables, duplicate rehearsal and concert CDs, organize potluck dinners following concerts, help with orchestra hiring, contact venues for concerts, manage the database, and on and on and on. There are too many volunteers to name here but you know who you are and the Chorus couldn't run without you.

CCC PARTNERS

The Cambridge Community Chorus has been incredibly fortunate to have wonderful partners in Cambridge. St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church was our home for *Messiah* rehearsals for many years and also for two *Messiah* Sings. St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church has been our base for works-in-progress and spring concerts and now all rehearsals. While we now pay rent to use the spaces, both churches have been remarkably generous over the years. MIT has offered Kresge Auditorium as a concert venue for winter concerts and spring concerts (every other year) since May 2003. Harvard University has supported our use of glorious Sanders Theatre for spring concerts every other year since 2002. The City of Cambridge has supported the Chorus from the beginning, and local businesses are always loyal when singers come asking for ads or auction items. We truly value our links with the broader community in Cambridge, and try to give back by bringing music to town events and institutions throughout the year.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

"Community" is a key word in our name, and a central part of our identity. The Chorus comes from the community and gives back to the community. Groups of our singers have enriched numerous community events.

Led by Donnell Patterson, we sang lively and inspiring gospel music in the Joyful Noise tributes to Martin Luther King Jr. from 1995–2000 and again in 2010. In 2001 and 2002 singers participated in the First Annual City-Wide Martin Luther King concert at St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church.

Voices from the Chorus

Jim Hickey, bass

President, 2009–2011

I was a boy soprano in a Catholic church, learned piano from the nuns, and learned to play bugle at the Manchester Boys Club. I sang in school—I was the Mikado in 7th grade—and in New Hampshire All-State choruses for six years. In high school I joined the band my junior year, learning to play trombone.

The Chorus has been an education, musically. Although I have this musical background, like a typical kid, I didn't take advantage of the wonderful teachers I had. I never really learned much in terms of history or theory. I've always loved that all our music directors have been educators and not just conductors. I'm learning something all the time about vocal technique and history.

I still think *Messiah* is the most wonderful music I've ever sung. The first time we did the closing movement of *Messiah* in concert—"Worthy is the Lamb," leading into the "Amen"—and every time thereafter, it left me so jacked up, exhilarated; it's an amazing piece to perform.

I'm prone to being blue during the holidays, from Thanksgiving to New Years, but I've found that singing really helps me get through the season, and more so now that I'm singing in two choruses. (I also sing with Mystic Chorale.) The first time I sang in both of them, I flew through the holidays. All of a sudden it was January, and I hadn't been down.

Singing is energizing and uplifting, and if you're really trying to sing well it requires the same kind of effort mentally and physically as any athlete—not quite as strenuous, but you're still controlling muscles and breathing, and being aware of your body. Occasionally I'll not feel like going to rehearsal, but I do and afterwards I'll usually feel so much better—refreshed, rejuvenated.



Pamela Mindell
Music Director 2014 –

While the Chorus sang its way through an ambitious, fun-filled 2013-14 season under the energetic leadership of Interim Music Director Mike Pfitzer, behind the scenes a nationwide search was under way for a new permanent music director to replace Jamie Kirsch.

The search cast a broad net, but in the end found a superb candidate very close to home. In an impressive pool of applicants, Pamela Mindell was outstanding, said Chorus President John Winslow. In addition to impeccable credentials (a master's in music education from the Hartt School and a doctorate in choral conducting from the Yale University School of Music) "Dr. Mindell impressed the selection committee with her energy, passion for both traditional and contemporary choral work, her experience working with community based choral groups, and her interest in combining musical excellence with community participation," he said.

Mindell developed her leadership skills as Director of Choral Programs at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, and then Director of Choral Activities at Clark University in Worcester. She has led her singers in performances in world-class venues, from Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome to Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. And her appearance with the Worcester Children's Chorus at Fenway Park in July, 2014, performing both the American and Canadian national anthems, shows that she values fun as much as focus.

On her appointment as the first ever woman to lead the Chorus, in July 2014, Mindell said that her main goal was "to give people a rich and varied choral experience," adding that "as a Cambridge resident, it's exciting to have a chance to really immerse myself in the musical life of the city." On both counts, she has lived up to and beyond all expectations, programming a mixture of contemporary and more familiar choral music, and giving countless extra hours to rehearse and accompany community activities



like carol singing and participation in the Holocaust Remembrance.

"Pam is just an amazing woman," said tenor Kathy Williams. "She gives so much of herself to the community and to the chorus." One small example, said Williams, was Mindell's response to some tenors having difficulty following the original practice CD for the Beethoven *Mass in C Major*. "The next week," said Williams, "Pam came in with a new CD—she did the whole lot, just playing the tenor part, counting

where it needed to be counted. Who else would have done that, and where does she find the time?" Mindell is also Artistic Director of the Worcester Children's Chorus, co-housemaster, with her husband, of MIT's Edgerton House, a coed residence for 184 graduate students, and the mother of two young daughters.

"I feel great confidence in Pam's ability to develop the Chorus over the long term," said former CCC President Paul Raila. He particularly enjoys her rehearsal technique. "Pam has a superb sense of rehearsal rhythm and flow," he said. "She has a great sense of what she wants, but she also has a sense of how to manage the ensemble. She'll have us stand, sit, she'll work on a piece, put it down, go back to it, and that's all part of her bag of tricks for managing the energy. That is a lot of what leadership is about, in any kind of group."



One of the most important community events to many members of the Cambridge Community Chorus is the annual City of Cambridge Holocaust Commemoration. Held at Temple Beth Shalom each spring since 1995, the CCC always participates, singing one or two songs in this solemn and meaningful act of remembrance. Listening to the stories of survivors and hearing the names of those who did not survive is a lasting and moving experience for all.

At holiday times the CCC has brought music to those who might not be able to attend a concert. From 1997–2006 (with the exception of 1998 and 2002), 40–60 singers, with soloists and a small chamber orchestra, performed *Messiah* selections for patients and their families at Youville Rehabilitation Hospital in Cambridge. We often concluded with everyone singing along to carols.

Several years ago, the Board decided to spread the musical joy even further during the holidays. Small groups rehearse and sing a variety of music—from carols to *Shalom Chaverim* to *Dona Nobis Pacem*—at Rosie's Place, Youville House Assisted Living Facility, meals programs for the homeless (at St. Bartholomew's and Christ Church), Cadbury Commons and Neville Place Assisted Living. Even people with failing memories often love to join in with the well-known carols.

Once the Chorus stopped performing the *Messiah* annually in 2009, many of us missed singing the beautiful, familiar piece every year. Starting in 2010, the CCC has organized a *Messiah* Sing at different venues (the Brattle Theater, the Dante Alighieri

Voices from the Chorus

Chantal Fujiwara, tenor



I was in my church choir in France when I was twelve. It was an adult choir but because my father was the minister and my brother in law was the choir director and my mother was in the choir and the rehearsals were right next door, I was allowed to go.

Before I joined the CCC I was a member of the Mystic Chorale, but I wanted something closer to home. I couldn't get into the CCC as an alto so I applied as a tenor and . . . voila! I like singing tenor because it has a wide range and it's melodious. And it's fun to sing with men because they have big voices, which helps me learn the music.

I joined the year we interviewed prospective directors and Pam turned out to be just the right combination of push and encouragement for us. She's clear and forceful and at the same time, she has a sense of humor.

The excitement at last fall's concert, the Beethoven, was palpable. Friends who came were blown away and some of them are still talking about it. I got the CD and it is amazing.

I don't do it for the result as much as for the process. I like being there every Monday. I love the concentrated time when I think of nothing else, where there is the push and the jokes and the common goal, and that moment when we're all on the same page . . . and it is beautiful. So it's a very, very precious moment in that way.



Chorus members bring holiday cheer to residents at Neville Place, an assisted-living community in Cambridge.

Voices from the Chorus

Carolyn Mellin, soprano

I cannot be without chorus. It's been an integral part of my life since fourth grade; it's a part of how I breathe, how I make my way through the world.

I think of every chorus as a unique entity, a collective of individuals who are trying to achieve a group harmony—in more ways than the musical. Pam rehearses all the parts separately and we struggle and we listen and we learn, and then there is that remarkable moment when we all come together and we start to sound good. It's an astonishing achievement really—that 100-plus individual voices can find their way to creating something beautiful together. We have to truly listen to one another or the group is discordant. If everyone sang in a chorus, I think we'd have a better world.

I loved when we performed *The Peacemakers*. To sing the words of Anne Frank and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, all saying essentially the same thing—almost like chanting a mantra—was so powerful. The children's chorus, with those clear, pure voices filtering through our mature ones, hoping for peace, was exquisite. That night, on that stage, with the full orchestra, the children and all of us was a perfect example of harmony achieved.

It's so cool thinking of us all scattered around wherever we live, practicing our music individually in our own ways, on the piano, on the computer, singing along with our practice tapes in the car and then coming together each week to create something. From our first painful sight reading efforts, through Pam's teaching, coaching, molding and refining (all those email notes) to walking out onto the stage and performing something beautiful—the process of creating something out of nothing just never gets old. It never stops being magical.



Society, St. Bartholomew's, and St. Paul AME Church) so people in the community are able to get their seasonal uplift. While there are many *Messiah* Sings in the Boston area, there is none quite like ours, with soloists auditioned from our group and the host location. Some in the audience just come to listen. At St. Paul, in 2014 and 2015, the reception after the Sing gave chorus members an opportunity to socialize with many old friends who sang with us during the early days of the Chorus.

On Monday, May 17, 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. At the stroke of midnight hundreds of people at Cambridge City Hall broke into cheers as the Cambridge City Clerk issued the first marriage license applications to gay and lesbian couples. And the Cambridge Community Chorus was there, to sing in the City Council chamber and cheer them on. One of those couples recalls, "We were either #242 or #244 and not able to apply for the marriage license until about 3 am. But what an environment! I remember angel wings, singing, crowds and wedding cakes! I remember all the people in the clerk's office being incredible. They were there virtually all night and then started processing more applications after 8:30 the next morning." The crowd around Cambridge City Hall threw rice and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" as

couples streamed through the front door and into the Clerk's office to apply, then out and down the steps. The CCC singers participated in an historic moment, one many will never forget.

In 2014, when the Board was brainstorming how to reach a broader audience within the Cambridge community, they hit upon the idea of doing a concert preview

*Messiah Sing, December 6, 2014
at St. Paul AME Church*



*Cambridge Public Library,
April 26, 2015*



Peter Kastner videotapes a presentation of awards to Choral Scholars for "Rehearsing the Messiah" on the 10th anniversary of the Chorus.

in our beautiful new Cambridge library. The library has a wonderful auditorium that has been home to films, lectures, debates, and presentations, but not much music. On a Sunday in April 2015 Pam led a group of about 30 chorus members—wearing the colorful stoles from Joyful Noise concerts—in a short concert of excerpts from *The Peacemakers* and some songs. It was an excellent way for us to sneak in another rehearsal as well as entertain a new audience, and we hope to return to this fine new venue.

Many of these community events, and some of our concerts, have been recorded by Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) and shown over and over so residents can enjoy them at home. For the Chorus' 10th anniversary, filmmaker Peter Kastner produced a documentary, "Rehearsing the *Messiah*," a delightful record of rehearsals, interviews with singers, and backstage scenes from the concert that aired on CCTV.

COLLABORATING IN CONCERT

More and more, the Cambridge Community Chorus has been sought out to collaborate with other musical groups.

We have performed Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* on two different occasions with two area orchestras. On December 20, 2009—only a week after our winter concert—we performed the Beethoven with the Cambridge Community Orchestra in Kresge Auditorium under the direction of Cynthia Woods. Learning such a demanding piece meant that Jamie had to squeeze in extra rehearsals.

The spring of 2014 proved even busier. The CCC performed in three concerts: as the chorus

Voices from the Chorus

Jane Whitehead, alto

When my friend Kate Olivier told me about this great chorus she had joined, it had been decades since I'd sung in a group, though I'd always loved to sing in choirs at school back in England. My baptism of fire with the CCC was Luis Bacalov's *Misa Tango*. I struggled with the unfamiliar rhythms, the weird (to me) harmonies and Argentine Spanish, but the dress rehearsal in Sanders Theater was a revelation, when we first heard the soaring solos by mezzo-soprano Gale Fuller and bass Robert Honeysucker, and the thrilling bandoneón accompaniment by Héctor Del Curto. Ever since then, I've loved dress rehearsals for their behind-the-scenes views of our professional collaborators. One indelible memory is of soprano Barbara Kilduff on her knees at the front of the stage in Sanders, while Luis Bacalov scribbled last-minute alterations into her part, at the dress for the premiere of the CCC commission *Cantos para Nuestros Tiempos* in May 2006. My own scariest, most challenging appearance was as a Witch in William Thomas's fully-staged version of *Dido and Aeneas* in May 2003—crouching petrified on stage at Kresge in my witchy wig, waiting for the cue for my first solo entrance just about cured me of any diva fantasies.



Voices from the Chorus

Gay Tappan, soprano

At school I sang in the glee club, small chorus and a group called the Octet. Outgoing seniors picked from the junior class and I was so thrilled to get chosen! I sang in the church choir; not because I loved going to church but because I loved singing. I didn't do much in college—I didn't do much for a very long time until I came to CCC.

When I was little I'd get up on Christmas morning, turn the radio on full blast, play the *Messiah* and sing all the parts. I had gotten to know Djana Marchisio, an alto in the Chorus. It was around Christmas time and I was saying to her, I wish there was a group that I could join, so we could sing *Messiah*. Djana said, you must come and join CCC!

Music is a great outlet, a great way to give voice to some of those emotions that we can't necessarily put into words. I remember when we came together for the *Messiah* open sing, the weekend of the Sandy Hook massacre in Connecticut. I was so grateful to have a place to go and be a part of. Afterwards, people were saying they'd been anxious that it might get cancelled—one father said his son had been practicing the Hallelujah Chorus all week.

I can't look at a piece of music, or a note, and sing it for you. So I struggle a little bit. But I've learned to listen to the people around me, and I'm getting better at listening to the people across the way. When I can do it, it helps a lot. I'll have moments when there's something I've been struggling with, particularly, and I think, I'm never going to get it, and then all of a sudden, one day, I get it! And it's just like, wow! Sublime!



in *Tosca* with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra in March; Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the Boston Civic Orchestra at Regis College in April; and then our own concert in May. Mike Pfitzer did an extraordinary job of preparing us for these performances with his usual thoroughness and good humor. Singing under different conductors was also a broadening experience. It was quite a marathon but we stretched our voices and our repertoire.

On April 21, 2013, the Chorus was honored to be a part of the "One Community | One Voice" benefit concert to recognize and support those affected by the Boston Marathon bombing. Choruses from all over New England gathered in Kresge Auditorum to sing Brahms' *German Requiem* led by four conductors in turn including Jamie Kirsch. It was a very moving and meaningful experience. We were both the audience and the performers and no one was left unaffected.

In the fall of 2013 and 2014, CCC was invited to participate in something completely different—"A Glimpse Beyond." Sponsored by the Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery, 'A Glimpse Beyond' is a site-specific thematic performance featuring dancers, singers, instrumentalists, and poets positioned in locations throughout the historic National Landmark. Viewers follow the winding paths of the cemetery, stopping to watch or see dancers and musicians through the trees. Performers and viewers alike enjoyed a magical and mystical experience.

tions throughout the historic National Landmark. Viewers follow the winding paths of the cemetery, stopping to watch or see dancers and musicians through the trees. Performers and viewers alike enjoyed a magical and mystical experience.



In the fall of 2014, Chorus members joined dancers, musicians and actors in 'A Glimpse Beyond' at Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Spotlight on the Accompanists

The Cambridge Community Chorus has been enormously fortunate in its professional musical leadership. From Donnell Patterson to Katie Houts, a succession of outstanding accompanists, all accomplished musicians in their own right, have collaborated with the music directors to enrich the experience of the Chorus.

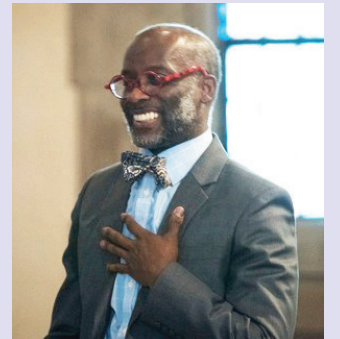
Choral accompanists have to be impeccable sight-readers, great listeners, patient, focused, intuitive and versatile. They have to keep the conductor's beat when the choir lags behind or races ahead. They have to interpret the quality of sound the conductor is seeking. They also need the ability to step up from behind the piano and lead a warm-up, take a sectional practice, or even occasionally direct an entire rehearsal.

For the first ten years of the Chorus, Donnell Patterson was William Thomas's co-conspirator in the musical formation of an enthusiastic band of novice singers, as accompanist for *Messiah* rehearsals and concerts. "You can imagine what I learned from just sitting under his baton—it was mad fun!" said Patterson, the long-time Minister of Music at St. Paul AME Church in Cambridge, Director of Music at Belmont Hill School, and chair of the Gospel Music Department at New England Conservatory's School of Preparatory and Continuing Education.

To prepare for the Chorus's first non-*Messiah* formal concert, Fauré's *Requiem*, in May 1993, Thomas brought on board organist, composer and author Leonardo Ciampa, artistic director of organ concerts at MIT and founding director of an all-professional choir, MetroWest Choral Artists. Ciampa remained as accompanist for all the Spring concerts until Thomas's retirement in 2008. In 2007, he wrote a piece for the Chorus in Thomas's honor, *Listen to Me*. Always proud of his Italian roots, in 2015 Ciampa was named Honorary Music Director of the Basilica of Saint Ubaldo in Gubbio, in the Italian province of Umbria.



Leonardo Ciampa



Donnell Patterson

As Music Director, Jamie Kirsch introduced Tatiana Vassilieva, a native of St. Petersburg, Russia, as his accompanist. Vassilieva said of her role: "I'm the extension of the conductor's fingers. It's my job to be there with every single motion. It's great with really good conductors—Jamie shows not just time-wise, where he wants you to be, but also the quality of sound he wants you to produce." Vassilieva moved on to a successful career as an operatic vocal coach and accompanist at Pacific Opera Victoria, in British Columbia, and at Santa Fe Opera.

Canadian-born Jamie Hillman took over from Vassilieva when she headed to Florida to pursue new opportunities in opera. "Sight-reading music is one of my favorite things," said Hillman, though he admitted to finding some of Kirsch's repertoire—Poulenc and Vaughan Williams, for example—more challenging than Mozart or Bach. Hillman is an all-round professional, known as a singer, pianist, conductor, music educator and composer. Since leaving CCC, he completed his D.M.A. at Boston University and is now on the Music Faculty at Gordon College on Boston's North Shore, in addition to serving as associate music director at Grace Chapel in Lexington, Mass.

When Katie Houts joined the Chorus as accompanist during the 2013-2014 season, it was immediately clear that she was a great asset at the keyboard. But it was only with Pamela Mindell's increasing use of sectional rehearsals that singers have come to appreciate Houts's talents as an inspiring coach. She developed these skills in her private studio, the Piano House, and during nine years as music director for Lutheran churches in Iowa and Minnesota and five years as director of a children's choir program in Minneapolis. As alto Susan Meurling puts it: "Katie is a multi-talented musician with so many wonderful qualities—she anticipates Pam's commands, she leads sectionals with aplomb and equanimity and she is a joy to know. We are so lucky to have her!"



Katie Houts

Voices from the Chorus

John Winslow, tenor
President, 2012–2016



Music was a central part of my childhood family life. Both my parents were professional musicians, and our house was always full of musicians from around the world. Two of my siblings became professional musicians, but though I played piano, cello and French horn through high school, I went on to other things and music remained with me only as a listener.

CCC changed that—giving me a chance in my adult life to be an active participant rather than just a consumer. I have found that I often choke up in Chorus and have to stop singing to get through certain passages—showing the emotional power that music has in my life. I have always known this—and will be forever grateful for the role that CCC has played in reconnecting my youth with my adult life and for providing me access to emotions that music touches in me.

Additionally—and perhaps most importantly—I reconnected with a childhood friend through CCC. Emily Bailey and I had known each other as children but had gone our separate ways as adults. She was a member of CCC and encouraged me to join in 2004. The rest, as they say, is history. We married in 2007 with music as a shared passion at the core of our life together. Thank you CCC!

I became president of the board in 2012 at what turned out to be a challenging period. We had to make the tough decision to institute member dues for the first time in the Chorus's history, to address the organization's critical financial state. We also had to deal with an unexpected leadership transition when Jamie Kirsch left, hire an interim music director at short notice (the excellent Mike Pfitzer), and conduct a nationwide search for a permanent music director.

Perhaps the achievement I'm proudest of as president is my leadership of the committee that ended up with the selection of Pam Mindell as our new permanent music director, starting in the 2014/15 season. That decision has turned out to be a very good one for CCC, and we hope very much that Pam will be the inspirational leader who takes CCC well into its next 25 years.

To celebrate 25 years of the Chorus we sponsored the Cambridge Community Chorus Choral Festival on Sunday, April 10, 2016. Joining us in Harvard's Memorial Church were the Harvard Radcliffe Chorus, Cantare (the children's division of Boston City Singers) and the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Vocal Ensemble. Each group in turn sang pieces from their current repertoire, and the afternoon culminated in a performance that included the world premiere of our 25th Anniversary commission piece, *Golden Slippers*, by Clifton J. Noble, Jr. Unfortunately, ill-health prevented Mr. Noble from attending, but the sight and sound of over 200 singers, aged ten to 85, all eyes fixed on the slender figure of Pam Mindell as she conducted this joyful spiritual from a podium in the aisle, marks a new high point in the CCC collective memory.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Cambridge Community Chorus has always been about more than music. It's also about having fun together. Chorus members often go out to eat after rehearsals. There were picnics (some of you will remember getting drenched in a Gloucester park) and more recently at Danehy Park in Cambridge. Good times have included the annual Board meetings at William's with fine china, silver and Cornish game hens; huge potluck dinners after *Messiah* concerts with great food and more singing; parties at

homes or restaurants after concerts; dancing the tango at the *Misa Tango* Dance Party, and much more.

All of the music directors have been wonderful to work with . . . and often put the Chorus in stitches. There were Mike's warm-up exercises—pretending to scold and then pat an imaginary dog—Pam's hilarious stories about her little daughters, and the many ingenious ways that Jamie used to get us to breathe properly (sip through a straw, fog your glasses, smell a flower.) And who can forget the many "Williamisms" that lit up rehearsals with William Thomas: "If you want to attract bears, use honey"; "I'll sit on you!"; "That's a dustball on the Titanic!"; and "I love you SO much, except when you do what you're doing right now, then I only love you so much."

There have been some amusing "disasters" and mishaps along the way. The start of one *Messiah* concert was delayed because the tenor, who has the first solo, hadn't showed up. As William always said, "Something will always go wrong and you just



(left) Chorus Picnic, June 2014 at Danehy Park. Can you find two music directors?
(above) Dining out after a concert.

have to roll with it." He explained the situation to the audience and the concert began without "Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted." As the Chorus was lined up in the basement of Kresge, waiting to go onstage after intermission, in strolled the tenor, amazed to see everyone, and mortified to find that he had missed his entrance. He had neglected to note that the concert was in the afternoon, not the evening, and had been killing time in Harvard Square, unreachable in those pre-cell-phone days. William, unflappable, simply started off Part II with the Part I solo.

The Chorus is also about relationships. It's a place where strangers have become friends, friendships have deepened through a love of music, and mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, siblings and spouses have shared the joy of singing together. Singing with others creates extraordinary bonds. As John Winslow says, the shared enthusiasm and sense of community that we find in the Chorus directly counter "the loss of associations in our culture as we increasingly do things on our own." All of us are richer for the relationships we've built, both musically and personally, and for the chance to meet and volunteer with people we would be unlikely to meet elsewhere. And we all know that singers are healthier than non-singers, and we live longer!

Voices from the Chorus

Kathy Williams, tenor



I've always been involved in music. I've been singing since I was in parochial school, and I played the flute for many years, and as I got older I loved guitar and took classical guitar lessons for seven years. I swear I took them just to hear and watch my guitar teacher. He was from Brazil, and he was so gorgeous, but I don't think I would even know how to hold a guitar today, if you asked me.

My first piano lessons were from my grandmother, who was an opera diva from Ireland who ended up teaching piano and voice here. Nothing like taking lessons from your grandmother. I promised my mother, "Ma, please, if you take me someplace else I'll practice and sing my heart out, but get me away from Nana—she's going to kill me!"

I hadn't sung since I graduated college, and I was on the Red Line and this lady sitting next to me was reading a letter with the CCC letterhead. We started up a conversation—it was Penny (Peters)—and she invited me to come and sing with them. I learned so much from William (Thomas), and as a result of that I started taking voice lessons with Bulent Güneralp, who was our tenor soloist in several concerts. Bulent was always encouraging me to audition for this, that and the other thing, so now I sing with the Harvard Summer Chorus. I thought, they're never going to pick me out of all those people, but I auditioned, and they did! We're very lucky, we have a wonderful community. I just never stop learning. With Pam, I thought, what more can we learn? And then, my lord! I had to go out and buy a book on solfège because I just couldn't do it!

SING ON!

There is nothing quite like mastering a piece of music and then performing it in front of an audience. That opportunity should never be taken for granted. The organization that makes it possible takes vision, effort, and leadership to sustain. As outgoing President John Winslow says: “Providing a non-auditioned choral experience with professional musical leadership is a real gift to members of any community, and the CCC has done this under remarkable and inspired leadership—beginning of course with William Thomas and now carrying on with Pam Mindell.”

As we move into our second quarter-century, our challenge is to stay close to our roots and founding principles, while looking for new ways to maintain diversity among our singers and audiences, remain affordable, and strengthen links between Cambridge and its Chorus. We had a taste of what the future might hold under the inspiring leadership of Music Director Pam Mindell at our 25th Anniversary Choral Festival. On Sunday April 10, 2016, at Harvard’s Memorial Church, over 200 singers aged ten to 85 from four local choruses spent a sunny spring afternoon singing together, before giving a joint performance of Clifton J. Noble Jr.’s *Golden Slippers*, commissioned by CCC to mark the 25th Anniversary. “In our troubled world,” says Pam Mindell, “music provides celebration, healing and hope,” and as the Chorus sings on through the coming years, we will seek ever more creative ways of sharing these gifts with our community.

The Cambridge Choral Festival, April 10, 2016 at Harvard Memorial Church. All four choruses sing Golden Slippers by Clifton J. Noble, Jr., a piece commissioned by the Cambridge Community Chorus, in celebration of the 25th Anniversary.



Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Vocal Ensemble. Ivan Stefanov, conductor



The Harvard Radcliffe Chorus. Michael Pfitzer, conductor

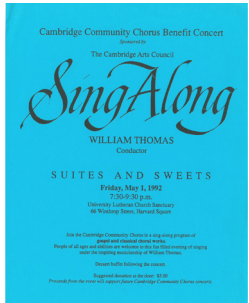


Cantare, a division of Boston City Singers. Joshua DeWitt, conductor



The Cambridge Community Chorus. Pamela Mindell, conductor

25 YEARS IN THE LIFE OF
THE CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CHORUS

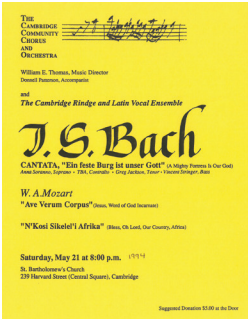


May 1, 1992
Open Sing
Vivaldi *Gloria*
Spiritual, *Soon Ah Will Be Done*

May 14, 1993
Fauré *Requiem*

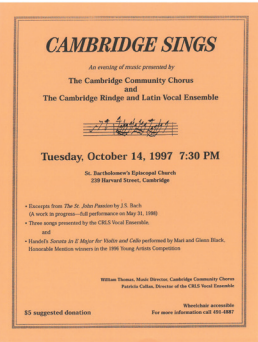
October 28, 1992
Open Sing
Schubert *Mass in G*
Gospel songs with Donnell Patterson

July 27, 1993
Open Sing
Haydn *The Creation*
Spirituals



May 21, 1994
N'Kosi Sikelel'i Africa
Mozart *Ave Verum*
Bach Cantata #80
Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

May 21, 1995
Beethoven *Mass in C*



May 19, 1996
Vivaldi *Gloria*
Coleridge-Taylor
Hiawatha's Wedding Feast

June 1, 1997
Mendelssohn *Elijah*

December 16, 1990
Handel *Messiah*

December 15, 1991
Handel *Messiah*

December 13, 1992
Handel *Messiah*

December 13, 1993
Handel *Messiah*

December 17, 1994
Handel *Messiah*

December 10, 1995
Handel *Messiah*

December 15, 1996
Handel *Messiah*

December 14, 1997
Handel *Messiah*

1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

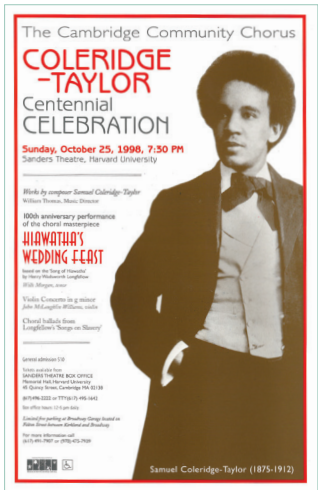
1995

1996

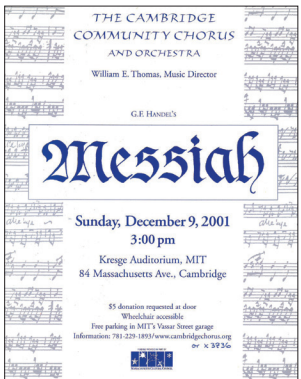
1997

William E. Thomas
Music Director

The CCC incorporates
as a nonprofit



May 31, 1998
Bach *St. John Passion*

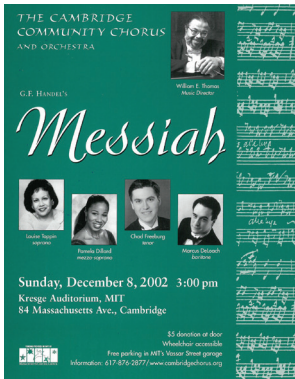


October 25, 1998
Coleridge-Taylor Centennial Celebration
Hiawatha's Wedding Feast
Violin Concerto in G Minor
Choral ballads from Longfellow's
'Songs on Slavery'

May 23, 1999
Nunes Garcia *Requiem*

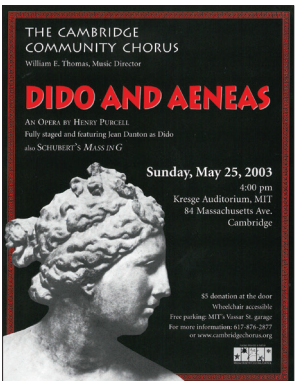
May 21, 2000
Haydn *Lord Nelson Mass*
Beethoven 'Ode to Joy' from
Symphony No. 9

May 20, 2001
Bach Cantata #4
Christ Lag in Todesbanden
Fauré *Requiem*
Negro Spirituals



May 19, 2002
Bach *Magnificat*
Bacalov *Misa Tango*

December 8, 2002
Handel *Messiah*



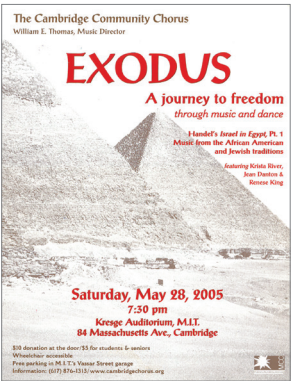
May 25, 2003
Schubert *Mass in G*
Purcell *Dido and Aeneas*

December 14, 2003
Handel *Messiah*



May 29, 2004
Chevalier de Saint-Georges
Symphonic Concertante
Antes *Chorale, Anthem*
Mozart *Requiem*

December 12, 2004
Handel *Messiah*



May 28, 2005
Exodus, A Journey to Freedom
Through Music and Dance

December 11, 2005
Handel *Messiah*

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

William E. Thomas
Music Director

Video "Rehearsing the
Messiah" by Peter Kastner

Messiah in
Tokyo, Japan
December 14, 2002

Chorus sings at the
Marriage Equality celebration
May 17, 2004



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